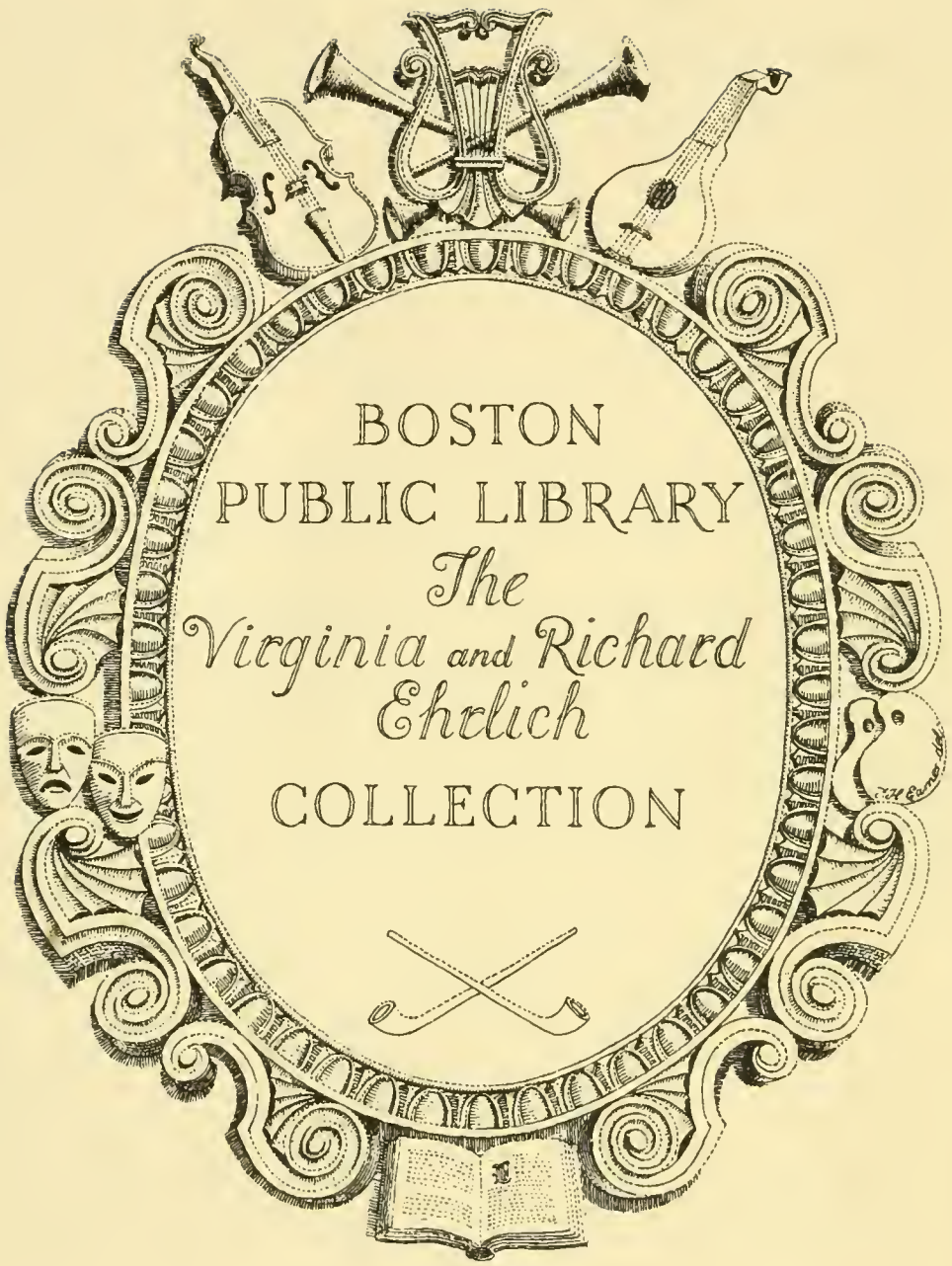
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"I WAS ABLE TO DISTINGUISH IN FRONT OF HIS SADDLE THE FORM OF A WOMAN, AND HIS HAND PRESSED OVER HER MOUTH."

THE WORKS

OF

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

LA DAME DE MONSOREAU

NEW YORK

THE CENTURY CO.

1909

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INTRODUCTION.

1578.

La Dame de Monsoreau is the second of the three Valois romances. The first, *Marguerite de Valois*, deals with the close of Charles IX.'s reign. At his death his brother Henri arrived just in time to be hailed Henri III. and to deprive Henry of Navarre of the regency, to the great joy of Catherine de Médicis, the Queen Mother. *La Dame de Monsoreau* takes up the story some three years later with Henri III. seated, but not very securely, upon the throne. The religious partisanship had become more and more intense after the massacre of Saint Bartholomew. The Guises seized the opportunity to rally around their standard a powerful party of Catholics known as the Holy League, whose ostensible mission was the defeat of the Huguenots, but whose secret aim was the overthrow of Henri III. Henri's reign was, therefore, a troubled one, being beset by foes within and without. He was incapable of action, since half a dozen other persons in the realm were as much king as he. His brother François, formerly Duc d'Alençon and now Duc d'Anjou, was a willing tool to any party that would give him the crown. Knowing François' weak, treacherous nature, the Guises made use of him in their plots of the League. Dumas has this to say of the situation:

"As for the King and Queen of Navarre, they had escaped, as we have related in a former work [*Marguerite de Valois*], into Navarre, and were now making open war on the King at the head of the Huguenots.

"The Duc d'Anjou was also making a kind of war on him, a war deep and underhand, a war in which he always took good care to keep in the background, thrusting to the front

such of his friends as had not been cured by the fate of La Mole and Coconnas, whose terrible death can hardly have been yet forgotten by our readers.

"As a matter of course his gentlemen and those of the King lived on the worst possible terms, and there were, at least twice or thrice a month, hostile encounters between them, which seldom passed without some one of the combatants being killed or grievously wounded.

"As for Catherine, she was at the height of her wishes: her best-beloved son was on that throne on which she had been so anxious to see him seated, for her own sake as well as for his; and she reigned through him, while apparently caring nothing for the things of this world and anxious only about her salvation."

But while the political horizon is very much darkened, the present volume is concerned with other interests in addition to those of politics. *La Dame de Monsoreau* presents three elements: the clash of jarring forces about the throne of France; the love episode of Bussy d'Amboise and Diane de Monsoreau; and the adventures of Chicot. Though these three elements can be enumerated, they cannot always be separated distinctly. Dumas is too skilful for that.

To the first element of politics we have already alluded; and after the reader has followed the troubled fortunes of the fitful Henri through the pages of this book and the succeeding story of *The Forty-Five Guardsmen* he will doubtless be interested in comparing the account with the very similar account furnished by history. Henri never rose above the level of a puppet monarch swayed by a passing caprice, the counsel of a friend, or a sudden outburst of temper.

The mutual love of Diane and Bussy weaves a thread of sentiment throughout the book, giving it a depth and a tenderness that is lacking in *Marguerite de Valois*. Diane is young, beautiful, and ardent. She gives the entire love of her life to the handsome and brave cavalier, the idol of France, who rescues her from a distasteful alliance. According to the French standard of morality, the lovers see nothing wrong in living as man and wife when fate prevents their legal union. If we can overlook this blot the love is a charming one. It is courageous and consistent; courageous because Bussy laid down his life gloriously in its expiation; consistent because Diane devoted all her after life to avenging her lover. How

well she succeeded in bringing down vengeance upon the head of D'Anjou is told in *The Forty-Five Guardsmen.*

The death of Bussy is magnificent. He fights against heavy odds, yet makes a marvellous record for himself. We can almost fancy the splendid Porthos of later years to have dreamed of some such deed as this before he entered the cavern of Belle-Isle. The description of the fight is wonderfully vivid, leaving our ears ringing with the din of clashing swords, our eyes dimmed by the smoke of arquebuses. Dumas displays a resourceful imagination in the depicting of those contests. Though they are constantly occurring in many stories of adventure, he rarely repeats himself. And here after disposing of the matchless Bussy he is able to take the reader on with unflagging interest to the hard-fought triple duel of the following morning.

We have spoken of the adventures of Chicot as a third and distinct element in the story. We believe they will admit of separate analyzation, although closely united with the varying fortunes of Henri III. For Chicot with all his jesting is a profound statesman whose opinions are of the utmost value to his master. To this master he is absolutely devoted. He knows all of Henri's foibles and idiosyncrasies; he does not hesitate to turn them jestingly upon the King. But meanwhile he watches over Henri tenderly, hedging him about with a zealous care that, on occasion, knows no sleeping. The monarch realizes this devotion and relies upon it. Among all his friends and minions with whom he longs to surround his throne, none receive the unlimited confidence bestowed upon the jester.

Chicot may be called the hero of the humorous, just as Bussy is the hero of the sentimental vein. We had Bussy to thank for the chivalry, the valor, and the tenderness. We have Chicot to thank for the drollery, the courage, and the devotion. Chicot is anything rather than an ordinary buffoon. He is a gentleman skilled and ready in the use of the sword, who finds, however, that other weapons — the weapons of satire and persiflage — are quite as keen and bright, and oftentimes inflict more lasting wounds. Chicot's adventures with the innocent Gorenflot are irresistibly comic. We fancy we can still see the wretched monk clinging to the mane and tail of the galloping ass, Panurge, while Chicot urges them on to a constantly increasing speed.

La Dame de Monsoreau, then, stands out the greatest of the Valois romances, and almost, if not quite, rivalling the D'Artagnan stories, by reason of its contrast of character and varied elements. We have the weak king and the strong jester; the treacherous Duc d'Anjou and the true Bussy; the unselfish devotion of Rémy, the young physician, and the love of Diane; the stupidity of Gorenflot; the cleverness of the Guises; and the bravado of the King's minions against the bravery of the Duke's gentlemen. In a less practised hand than that of Dumas, the story would have become hopelessly involved in the *mélange*, but here the builder is also the architect, knowing in advance the place in which each portion is to go, and proceeding unhesitatingly and unswervingly in the construction of a symmetrical, satisfying piece of historical fiction.

J. Walker McSpadden.

Mons.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

AURILLY, confidant of the Duc d'Anjou.
BERNOUILLET, host of the La Croix inn.
BONHOMET, MAÎTRE CLAUDE, host of the "Corne d'Abundance" inn.
BRISSAC, MARÉCHAL DE COSSÉ–, of the court.
CATHERINE DE MÉDICIS, Queen Mother.
CHICOT, DE, King's jester.
CRILLON, DE, Colonel of the Guards.
CROQUENTIN, of the League.
D'AMBOISE, BUSSY (COMTE LOUIS DE CLERMONT), friend of the Duc d'Anjou.
D'ANJOU, FRANÇOIS, DUC, brother of Henri III.
D'AUBIGNÉ, AGRIPPA, friend of Henri of Navarre.
DAVID, MAÎTRE NICOLAS, of the League.
D'ENTRAGUES, CHARLES BALZAC (or, ANTRAGUET), friend of the Duc d'Anjou.
D'ÉPERNON, NOGARET, friend of Henri III.
D'O, friend of Henri III.
FOULON, JOSEPH, prior of the Convent of Sainte Geneviève.
GERTRUDE, servant of Mme. de Monsoreau.
GONDY, PIERRE DE, of the League.
GORENFLOT, JACQUES, Jacobin monk.
GUISE, HENRI DE LORRAINE, DUC DE, of the League.
HENRI III., King of France.
HENRI DE BOURBON, King of Navarre.
LA HURIÈRE, MAÎTRE, host of the "Belle Étoile" inn.
LE HAUDOUIN, RÉMY, physician, friend of Bussy d'Amboise.
LIVAROT, DE, friend of the Duc d'Anjou.
LORRAINE, CARDINAL DE, of the League.
LOUISE DE LORRAINE, Queen of France.
MAUGIRON, DE, friend of Henri III.
MAYENNE, DUC DE, of the League.

Méridor, Baron de, gentleman of Anjou.
Monsoreau, Bryan de, grand huntsman.
Monsoreau, Mme. Diane de (née Méridor) wife of foregoing.
Montpensier, Duchesse de, of the League.
Morvilliers, De, chancellor.
Nancey, De, captain of the Guard.
Quélus, Jacques de Lévis, Comte de, friend of Henri III.
Ribeirac, François d'Audie, Vicomte de, friend of the Duc d'Anjou.
Saint-Luc, François d'Épinay, de, friend of Henri III.
Saint-Luc, Mme. Jeanne de (née Cossé-Brissac), wife of foregoing.
Schomberg, De, friend of Henri III.

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LA DAME DE MONSOREAU.

CHAPTER I.

SAINT-LUC'S WEDDING.

After the people's celebration of Shrove Sunday in the year 1578, just as the last murmurs of the joyous merry-making were dying away in the streets, a splendid festival was beginning in the magnificent hôtel, lately built on the other side of the water, almost fronting the Louvre, by that illustrious House of Montmorency, which was allied to the royal house of France and regarded itself as on a level with princely families. The object of this private festival, which followed the public festival, was to celebrate the wedding of François d'Epinay de Saint-Luc, the familiar friend and favorite of Henry III., with Jeanne de Cossé-Brissac, daughter of the French marshal of that name.

The banquet had taken place at the Louvre, and the King, who had consented to the marriage with the greatest reluctance, was present at the feast, but the harsh expression of his features was not at all in harmony with the occasion. His costume, too, was in keeping with his face: it was the dark maroon costume in which he is painted by Clouet at the wedding of Joyeuse, and his austere and majestic aspect, making him look like some royal spectre, struck every one with terror, especially the young bride, at whom he looked askance, whenever he did look at her.

And yet the sombre attitude of the King, in the midst of this fête, did not seem strange to the guests, for the cause of it was one of those court secrets along which courtiers glide with the greatest caution, knowing they are like those rocks that rise to the level of the sea and are fatal to the ships that touch them.

The banquet was hardly over before the King started up, and, of course, all the guests had to do the same, even those who acknowledged in a whisper their unwillingness to imitate the royal example.

Then Saint-Luc, after gazing long and earnestly on his wife's face, as if to draw courage from her eyes, approached the King.

"Sire," said he, "will your Majesty deign to be present at the entertainment which I am giving this evening in your honor at the Hôtel de Montmorency?"

Henry III. had turned round with a mixture of annoyance and anger, and, after Saint-Luc's request, proffered in the softest and most imploring tone and in his most winning manner, he answered:

"Yes, monsieur, we will go, although you certainly do not deserve this token of friendship on our part."

Then Mademoiselle de Brissac, now Madame de Saint-Luc, had humbly thanked the King. But Henri had turned his back on her, without making any reply to her thanks.

"What has the King against you, M. de Saint-Luc?" the wife had asked her husband.

"I will explain later on, my darling," said Saint-Luc, "when this angry mood of his has passed away."

"But will it pass?" asked Jeanne.

"Most certainly it will," answered the young man.

Mademoiselle de Brissac had not been Madame de Saint-Luc long enough to insist on a definite reply: she put a strong restraint on her curiosity, but with the firm purpose of making Saint-Luc speak out when the moment would be favorable for forcing him to confess.

Henry III. was expected, then, at the Hôtel de Montmorency just at the moment when the story we are about to relate to our readers opens. Now it was already eleven and the King had not yet arrived.

Saint-Luc had invited to this ball all whom the King, as well as himself, reckoned as friends; he had included in his invitations the princes and princes' favorites, especially those of our old acquaintance, the Duc d'Alençon, who had become the Duc d'Anjou on the accession of Henri III. to the throne; but, as the Duc d'Anjou had not been present at the banquet in the Louvre, it did not seem likely, either, that he would make his appearance at the fête in the Hôtel de Montmorency.

As for the King and Queen of Navarre, they had escaped, as we have related in a former work, into Navarre, and were now making open war on the King at the head of the Huguenots.

The Duc d'Anjou was also making a kind of war on him,

a war dark and underhand, a war in which he always took good care to keep in the background, thrusting to the front such of his friends as had not been cured by the fate of La Mole and Coconnas, whose terrible death can hardly have been yet forgotten by our readers.

As a matter of course, his gentlemen and those of the King lived on the worst possible terms, and there were, at least twice or thrice a month, hostile encounters between them, which seldom passed without some one of the combatants being killed or grievously wounded.

As for Catherine, she was at the height of her wishes : her best-beloved son was on that throne on which she had been so anxious to see him seated, for her own sake as well as for his ; and she reigned through him, while apparently caring nothing for the things of this world and anxious only about her salvation.

Saint-Luc, although becoming terribly uneasy when he saw that no member of the royal family showed any sign of appearing, did his best to reassure his father-in-law, whom this menacing absence was worrying. Convinced, like everybody, of the friendship of Henri for Saint-Luc, he had fancied that he was forming an alliance with the royal favor, and now it looked as if his daughter had, on the contrary, made a marriage with disgrace ! Saint-Luc did all he could to inspire him with a confidence he did not feel himself, and his friends, Maugiron, Schomberg, and Quélus, garbed in their most magnificent costumes, stiff in their splendid doublets, whose enormous ruffs looked like chargers on which their heads were resting, added to his dismay by their ironical lamentations.

"Good heavens, my poor friend !" exclaimed Jacques de Lévis, Comte de Quélus, "I 'm afraid it is all up with you at last ! The King will never forgive you for making fun of his opinions, and the Duc d'Anjou will never forgive you for making fun of his nose !"[1]

"You are quite mistaken, Quélus," answered Saint-Luc. "The King is not coming because he is making a pilgrimage to the Minims[2] in the Bois de Vincennes, and the Duc d'Anjou is absent because he is in love with some woman I forgot to invite."

---

[1] The small-pox had so badly treated the Duc d'Anjou that he seemed to have two noses.

[2] An order of monks.

"You 're not serious!" said Maugiron. "Did n't you see how the King looked at dinner? Was that the godly phiz of one just on the point of taking up his pilgrim's staff? And though the absence of the Duc d'Anjou could be explained by what you have just said, would that account for his Angevins not coming? Do you see a single soul of them here? Look — a total eclipse; not even that swash-buckler Bussy!"

"Ah, gentlemen," groaned the Duc de Brissac, shaking his head despairingly, "this, to my mind, has all the effect of a complete disgrace! Heavens above us! How can our house, which has always been so devoted to the monarchy, have displeased his Majesty?"

And the old courtier raised his arms in anguish to the skies.

The young men turned their eyes on Saint-Luc and burst into roars of laughter, and this, far from restoring the marshal's equanimity, made him more despondent than ever.

The young bride was plunged in serious thought, wondering, like her father, how Saint-Luc could have displeased the King.

But Saint-Luc knew, and this knowledge rendered him even more anxious than the others.

And then, all of a sudden, at one of the two doors that gave entrance into the hall the King was announced. "Ah!" cried the marshal, radiant with joy, "now I fear nothing, and if only the Duc d'Anjou were announced, my satisfaction would be complete."

"And as for me," murmured Saint-Luc, "I am in much more dread of the King, now that he is here, than if he were away, for he comes to do me some ill turn or other, just as the Duc d'Anjou stays away for the same purpose."

But this gloomy reflection did not hinder him from hurrying to meet the King, who had doffed his sombre maroon costume and was resplendent in satin, plumes, and precious stones.

However, just at the moment when Henri III. appeared at one of the doors another Henry III. appeared at the door opposite, and this royal personage was exactly garbed like the first, with the same make-up of the face and hair, the same ruff, and the same boots. The courtiers, carried along for a moment in the direction of the first, stopped, as the waves do at the pier of an arch, and, with many a whirl, ebbed back from the first King to the second.

Henri III. took note of the movement, and seeing nothing

before him but open mouths, bewildered eyes, and bodies pirouetting on one leg:

"Come now, gentlemen," said he, "will none of you explain the meaning of all this?"

A prolonged burst of laughter was the answer.

The King, naturally impatient, and at this moment more so than ever, frowned. Saint-Luc drew near him.

"Sire," said he, "it is Chicot, your jester; he is dressed exactly like your Majesty, and is giving the ladies his hand to kiss."

Henri III. laughed. Chicot enjoyed the same freedom at the court of the last of the Valois that Triboulet had enjoyed, thirty years before, at the court of Francis I., and which Langely was to enjoy, forty years later, at the court of Louis XIII.

One reason for this was that Chicot was no ordinary fool. Before he had taken the name of "Chicot" he was known as "*De* Chicot." He was a Gascou gentleman who had been wrongfully treated by the Duc de Mayenne because of a love-affair in which he was the latter's rival, and his triumphant rival also, although a mere private gentleman. He fled to the court of Henri III., and he paid amply for the protection afforded him by the truths — occasionally unpleasant ones — which he dinned into the ears of the successor of Charles IX.

"Come now, Master Chicot," said Henri, "don't you think two kings here just one too many?"

"Then, you let me play my part as king my own way, and you play the part of the Duc d'Anjou your way; maybe you will be taken for him and told things from which you might learn, not what he thinks, but what he does."

"Hum!" muttered Henri, with an ill-tempered glance around him, "my brother d'Anjou is not come."

"The more reason why you should take his place. The thing is settled: I am Henri, you are François; I ascend the throne, you will dance; for your sake I 'll flit through all the mummeries connected with the crown, while, during this time, you will have a chance of amusing yourself, poor King!"

The eyes of the King rested on Saint-Luc.

"You are right, Chicot, I will dance," said he.

"Decidedly," thought Brissac, "I was mistaken in thinking the King angry with us. On the contrary, he is in the best of humor."

And he ran right and left, congratulating every one he met, but particularly himself, on having given his daughter to a man who enjoyed his Majesty's favor to such a high degree.

Meanwhile, Saint-Luc had come close to his wife. Mademoiselle de Brissac was not a beauty; but her dark eyes were charming, her teeth pearly, and her complexion was dazzling.

With one single thought always in her mind, she addressed her husband:

"Monsieur, why have I been told the King was angry with me? Why, ever since he came, he has done nothing but smile at me!"

"That was not what you said after returning from the banquet, my dear, for his look then frightened you."

"His Majesty may have been ungracious at the time," returned the young woman, "but now"—

"Now it 's far worse," interrupted Saint-Luc; "he smiles with closed lips. It would please me better if he showed his teeth. Jeanne, my poor darling, the King has some treacherous surprise in store for us. Oh, do not gaze at me so tenderly, I beseech you!—nay, even turn your back on me. And, by the way, Maugiron is coming up to us. Talk with him, keep him all to yourself, and be very friendly with him."

"Are you aware, monsieur," retorted Jeanne, with a smile, "that your recommendation is a very singular one, and, if I followed it literally, why, people might think"—

"Ah!" said Saint-Luc, with a sigh, "it would be a very fortunate thing if they did."

And turning his back on his wife, whose amazement was now beyond expression, he started to pay his court to Chicot, who was acting his part as king with a dash and majesty that were as ludicrous as could be.

Meanwhile, Henry was profiting by the holiday Chicot had granted him from regal toil; but although he danced, he kept his eyes on Saint-Luc. Sometimes he called him to listen to a jocose observation, which, whether witty or the reverse, sent Saint-Luc into roars; sometimes he offered him out of his comfit-box burnt almonds and iced fruit, which Saint-Luc declared delicious. If he left the hall for a moment to attend to his guests in the other apartments the King sent an officer or one of Saint-Luc's kinsmen for him immediately, and Saint-Luc had to return, with a smile for his master, who seemed unhappy when he was out of his sight.

Suddenly a sound so loud that it could be heard above all the tumult came to the ears of Henri.

"Hush!" said he. "Why, surely that must be Chicot's voice. Do you hear, Saint-Luc? The King is angry."

"Yes, sire," said Saint-Luc, without seeming to notice the covert allusion of his Majesty, "he is apparently quarrelling with some one or other."

"Go and see what is the matter, and return at once with the news."

Saint-Luc withdrew.

And, in fact, it was Chicot, who was crying out, in the nasal tones used by the King on certain occasions,

"I have issued sumptuary edicts, however. But if they are not numerous enough, I will issue more; I will issue so many that you 'll have enough of them; if they be not good, at least you'll have enough of them to content ye. Six pages, M. de Bussy! By the horn of Beelzebub, cousin, this is too much!"

And Chicot, puffing out his cheeks, arching his hips, and putting his hand to his side, imitated the King to perfection.

"What is he saying about Bussy?" asked the King, frowning.

Saint-Luc, who had returned, was about to answer, when the crowd opened and six pages appeared in sight, clad in cloth of gold, covered with carcanets, and having on their breasts their master's arms, sparkling in precious stones.

Behind them came a young man, handsome and haughty. He walked with head erect and a scornful light in his eyes. There was a contemptuous expression in the fold of his lips, and his plain dress of black velvet contrasted strikingly with the rich garb of these pages.

"Bussy!" "Bussy d'Amboise!" was repeated from mouth to mouth. And every one ran to meet the young man who created all this excitement, and then stood aside to let him pass.

Maugiron, Schomberg, and Quélus had drawn near to the King, as if to defend him.

"Hullo!" said the first, alluding to the unexpected presence of Bussy and the continued absence of the Duc d'Alençon, to whom Bussy belonged, — "hullo! the valet we have, but we don't see the valet's master."

"Patience!" rejoined Quélus; "in front of the valet we

have had the valet's valets; the valet's master is, perhaps, coming behind the first valets' master."

"I say, Saint-Luc," said Schomberg, youngest of Henri's minions and also one of the bravest, "do you know that M. de Bussy is doing you very little honor? Don't you notice his black doublet? God's death! is that the sort of dress for a wedding? Eh?"

"No," retorted Quélus, — "for a funeral!"

"Ah!" murmured Henri, "why should it not be for his own — and worn in advance of the ceremony?"

"For all that, Saint-Luc," said Maugiron, "M. d'Anjou does not follow Bussy. Might it be that you are in disgrace in that quarter *also?*"

The *also* smote Saint-Luc to the heart.

"But why should he follow Bussy?" replied Quélus. "Surely you must remember that when his Majesty did M. de Bussy the honor of asking him to belong to himself, M. de Bussy's answer was that, being of the House of Clermont, there was no reason why he should belong to anybody, and he was satisfied with belonging purely and solely to himself, being confident he should find in himself the best prince in the world."

The King frowned and bit his mustache.

"Say what you like about it," returned Maugiron, "to my mind he is M. d'Anjou's servant, beyond a doubt."

"Then," retorted Quélus coolly, "it is so because M. d'Anjou is a greater lord than the King."

This observation was the most poignant that could be made in Henri's presence, for he had ever had a quite brotherly detestation for the Duc d'Anjou.

So, although he did not utter a syllable, he was seen to turn pale.

"Come, come, gentlemen," Saint-Luc ventured, in trembling tones, "have a little charity for my guests; do not spoil my wedding-day."

This remark probably recalled Henri to another train of thought.

"Yes," said he, "we must not spoil Saint-Luc's wedding-day, gentlemen."

And he twisted his mustache, uttering the words in a mocking tone that did not escape the poor husband.

"So," cried Schomberg, "Bussy is now connected with the Brissacs, is he not?"

"How?" said Maugiron.

"Why, you see Saint-Luc defends him. What the devil! in this poor world of ours where we have enough to do to defend ourselves, we defend only our relations, allies, and friends; at least, that's my idea."

"Gentlemen," said Saint-Luc, "M. de Bussy is neither my ally, friend, nor relation: he is my guest."

The King darted an angry look at Saint-Luc.

"And besides," the latter hastened to say, terrified by the look of the King, "I am not defending him the least bit in the world."

Bussy walked behind his pages with an air of great seriousness and was drawing near to salute the King, when Chicot, hurt that any but himself should have priority in rank, cried:

"Ho, there! Bussy, Bussy d'Amboise, Louis de Clermont, Count de Bussy, — since it seemeth we must give thee all thy names, to the end that thou mayest recognize it is to thee we speak. Dost not see the true Henri? Dost not distinguish the King from the fool? He whom thou goest to is Chicot, my fool, my jester, a fellow who worketh so many antic follies that sometimes he makes me almost die from laughing."

Bussy continued his way until he was in front of Henri. He was about to make his bow, when Henri said:

"Do you not hear, M. de Bussy? You are called."

And, in the midst of a roar of laughter from his minions, he turned his back on the young captain.

Bussy reddened with anger. But checking his first impulse, he pretended to take the remark of the King seriously; and, without seeming to have noticed the merriment of Quélus, Maugiron, and Schomberg, or their insolent smiles, he turned back to Chicot.

"Ah, you must pardon me, sire!" said he, "there are kings who bear such a close resemblance to buffoons that you will, I hope, excuse me for taking your buffoon for a king."

"Eh!" murmured Henri, turning round; "what is that he's saying?"

"Nothing, sire," said Saint-Luc, who, that evening, appeared really to have received from Heaven the mission of pacificator, "nothing, really."

"No matter, Master Bussy!" cried Chicot, standing on tiptoe, as the King did when he wanted to look majestic, "your conduct was unpardonable."

"Sire," answered Bussy, "pardon me. I was preoccupied."

"With your pages, monsieur?" retorted Chicot, crossly. "God's death, man! you are ruining yourself in pages. Why, it is encroaching on our prerogatives!"

"How can that be?" said Bussy, who saw that by giving the jester a loose rein he should make it all the unpleasanter for the King. "I beseech your Majesty to explain; and if I have in truth done wrong I am ready to confess my sin in all humility."

"Cloth of gold on these rapscallions! Did one ever hear the like?" exclaimed Chicot, pointing to the pages; "while you, a nobleman, a colonel, a Clermont, almost a prince, in fact, are dressed in plain black velvet."

"Sire," said Bussy, facing the King's minions, "the reason is obvious. At a time when we see rapscallions in the dress of princes, I think it is good taste for princes, in order to mark the difference between them, to dress like rapscallions."

And he repaid the splendidly apparelled and jewelled young minions with the same insolent smile they had bestowed on him a moment before.

Henri saw his favorites turn pale with fury. They seemed just to be waiting for a word from their master to fling themselves on Bussy. Quélus, the most enraged of any of them with this gentleman, whom he would have already fought but for the King's express prohibition, had his hand on his sword-hilt.

"Do you refer to me and mine in these remarks of yours?" cried Chicot, who, having usurped the King's seat, answered as Henri might have answered.

And the jester, while speaking, assumed an attitude of such extravagant swagger that one-half of those present burst out laughing. The other half did not laugh, for a very simple reason: the half that laughed, laughed at the other half.

However, three of Bussy's friends, believing perhaps there was going to be a scuffle, came and took their places near him. They were Charles Balzac d'Entragues, better known as Antraguet, François d'Audie, Vicomte de Ribeirac, and Livarot.

On seeing these hostile preliminaries Saint-Luc guessed that Bussy had come by order of Monsieur, with the intention of creating a scandal or sending a challenge. He trembled more than ever, for he felt he was caught between the flaming rage of two powerful enemies who selected his house as their field of battle.

He ran up to Quélus, apparently the most violent of them all, and laying his hand on the hilt of the young man's sword:

"For God's sake!" said he, "keep quiet, my friend, and let us wait."

"Egad! you can keep quiet if it suit you!" he cried. "The blow of that booby's fist has fallen on your cheek as well as on mine: he who says anything against one of us says it against all of us, and he who says it against all of us touches the King."

"Quélus, Quélus," said Saint-Luc, "think of the Duc d'Anjou, who is behind Bussy, the more on the watch because he is absent, the more to be dreaded because he is invisible. You will not surely insult me by believing, I hope, that I am afraid of the valet, though I am of the master."

"And, God's death!" cried Quélus, "what has any one to fear when he belongs to the King of France? If we get into danger for his sake, the King of France will defend us."

"You, yes; but me!" said Saint-Luc, piteously.

"Ah! but why the devil did you also go and marry, when you knew how jealous the King is in his friendships?"

"Good!" said Saint-Luc to himself, "every one is thinking only of his own interests; then I must not forget mine, and as I want to have a quiet life, at least during the first fortnight of my marriage, I 'll try to make a friend of M. d'Anjou." And thereupon he left Quélus and advanced toward Bussy.

After his impertinent apostrophe Bussy had raised his head proudly and looked round every part of the hall, on the watch for any impertinence that would be a retort on his own. But every head was turned aside, every mouth dumb: some were afraid of approving, in presence of the King; others of disapproving, in the presence of Bussy.

The latter, seeing Saint-Luc approach, thought that at length he had found what he was on the watch for.

"Monsieur," said he, "do I owe the honor of the conversation with me which you seem to desire to what I have just said?"

"What you have just said?" asked Saint-Luc, in his most gracious manner. "Pray, what have you said? I heard nothing of it, certainly. No, as soon as I saw you, I wished to have the pleasure of bidding you welcome, and, while doing so, offering my sincere thanks for the honor your presence here confers on my house."

Bussy was a man of superior quality in everything. Brave to rashness, he was at the same time scholarly, sharp-witted, and most interesting in company; he knew Saint-Luc's courage and saw clearly that at this moment the duty of the host had got the better of the touchiness of the duellist. If it had been any person else he would have repeated his phrase, that is to say, his challenge; but he contented himself with bowing profoundly to Saint-Luc and thanking him in some gracious words.

"Oho!" said Henri, on seeing Saint-Luc so close to Bussy. "I fancy my young rooster is pitching into the braggadocio. He has done right, but I don't want him to be killed. You, Quélus, then, go and see — But no, not you, Quélus, you 're too hot-headed. You see to the matter, Maugiron."

Saint-Luc, however, did not let him approach Bussy, but met him on the way, and together they returned to the King.

"What were you saying to that coxcomb Bussy?" inquired the King.

"I, sire?"

"Yes, you."

"I bade him good evening," said Saint-Luc.

"Oh, indeed! that was all, was it?" growled the King.

Saint-Luc saw he had made a blunder.

"I bade him good evening, and told him I should have the honor to bid him good day to-morrow morning," he returned.

"Good!" said Henri. "I suspected as much, you madcap."

"But will your gracious Majesty deign to keep my secret?" added Saint-Luc, affecting to speak in a whisper.

"Oh, *pardieu!*" returned Henri, "it is not because I want to stand between you that I speak of the matter. Assuredly, if you could rid me of the fellow without getting a scratch yourself" —

The minions exchanged rapid glances, which Henri appeared not to notice.

"For the fact is," continued the King, "the rascal's insolence is beyond" —

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Saint-Luc. "But you may rest assured, sire, he 'll find his master some day or other."

"Humph!" grumbled the King, shaking his head up and down, "he knows what he 's about when he has a sword in his hand! I wish to Heaven some mad dog would bite him; that would put him out of the way in a fashion that would suit us better than any other."

And he flashed a look at Bussy, who, attended by his three friends, was walking up and down, jostling and jibing at those he knew to be especially hostile to the Duc d'Anjou, and, consequently, the King's greatest friends.

"*Corbleu!*" cried Chicot, "don't maul my noble minions in this fashion, Master Bussy, for, though I am a king, I can wield a sword just as well as if I were a jester, no better and no worse."

"Hah! the rascal!" murmured Henri; "upon my word his view of the matter is right enough."

"Sire," said Maugiron, "if Chicot does not stop these scurvy jests, I'll be obliged to chastise him."

"Don't meddle with him, Maugiron; Chicot is a gentleman and very ticklish on the point of honor. Besides, he is not the one who deserves chastisement the most, for he is not the one that is most insolent."

This time it was impossible to be mistaken. Quélus made a sign to D'O and D'Épernon, who, being engaged elsewhere, had had no share in all that had just passed.

"Gentlemen," said Quélus, leading them aside, "I want you to take counsel together. As for you, Saint-Luc, you had better have a talk with the King and finish making your peace with him. In my opinion the matter has begun favorably."

Saint-Luc preferred this course, and approached the King and Chicot, who were having words.

Quélus, on his side, led his friends to a recess in one of the windows.

"Now," asked d'Épernon, "I should just like to know what you mean. I was in a fair way of making myself agreeable to Joyeuse's wife, and I give you fair warning that if your story is not of the most interesting description I'll never forgive you."

"My meaning is, gentlemen," answered Quélus, "that, after the ball, I am going at once a-hunting."

"Good!" said D'O, "a-hunting what?"

"A-hunting the wild boar."

"What bee have you got in your bonnet? Have you a fancy for getting yourself disembowelled in some thicket in this freezing weather?"

"No matter; I'm off."

"Alone?"

"No, with Maugiron and Schomberg. We go a-hunting for the King."

"Ah, yes, now I understand," said Schomberg and Maugiron in unison.

"The King wishes a boar's head to-morrow for breakfast."

"With the neck dressed *à l'italienne*," said Maugiron, alluding to the simple turn-down collar which Bussy wore, to mark his dislike of the ruffs of the minions.

"Aha!" said D'Épernon, "good! I'm one of the party, then."

"But what in the devil are you all driving at?" inquired D'O. "I am altogether at sea."

"Eh? Look around you, my darling."

"Well! I'm looking."

"And is there any one there who has laughed in your face?"

"Bussy, as I imagine."

"Well, then! Don't you think you have before your eyes a boar whose head would be pleasing to the King?"

"You believe the King would" — said D'O.

"'T is he who asks for it," answered Quélus.

"So be it, then! The hunt is up! But how shall we do our hunting?"

"Under cover; it is the surest."

Bussy noticed the conference, and having no doubt that he was the subject of it, approached, a sneer on his lips, with his friends.

"Look, Antraguet! Look, Ribeirac!" said he; "how closely they are grouped together! Is n't it quite touching? It makes you think of Euryalus and Nisus, Damon and Pythias, Castor and — But, by the way, where is Pollux?"

"Pollux is married," said Antraguet, "so that Castor is left all alone."

"What can they be doing there?" asked Bussy, with an insolent glance in their direction.

"I should wager they are plotting the invention of some new kind of starch," said Ribeirac.

"No, gentlemen," said Quélus, smiling, "we were talking about hunting."

"Really, Signor Cupid," said Bussy, "it is very cold weather for hunting. You'll get your skin all chapped."

"Monsieur," replied Maugiron, in the same polite tone, "we have very warm gloves and our doublets are lined with fur."

"Ah, I am reassured. Does the hunt take place soon?"

"Well, perhaps to-night," said Schomberg.

"There is no perhaps; to-night, certainly," added Maugiron.

"In that case, I must warn the King," said Bussy. "What would his Majesty say if he discovered to-morrow that all his friends had caught colds?"

"Don't give yourself the trouble of warning the King, monsieur," said Quélus; "his Majesty knows already that we are going a-hunting."

"Larks?" asked Bussy, in his most insulting manner.

"No, monsieur," said Quélus. "We hunt the boar. We must have a boar's head. It is absolutely needed."

"And the animal?" inquired Antraguet.

"Is started," said Schomberg.

"But still you ought to know where it will pass?" asked Livarot.

"We shall try to learn," said D'O. "Would you like to hunt with us, M. de Bussy?"

"No," answered the latter, continuing the conversation in the same tone; "in fact, I cannot. To-morrow I must visit M. d'Anjou and take part in the reception of M. de Monsoreau, to whom Monseigneur has, as you are aware, given the post of grand huntsman."

"But to-night?" asked Quélus.

"Ah, to-night I cannot, either; I have a rendezvous in a mysterious house in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine."

"Aha!" said D'Épernon; "so Queen Margot is incognita in Paris, M. de Bussy, for we have learned that you became La Mole's heir."

"Yes, but I renounced my inheritance some time ago. and the person in question is n't the same at all."

"And so this person expects you in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine?" inquired D'O.

"Quite correct. And, by the way, I should like to have your advice, M. de Quélus."

"You can have it. Although not a lawyer, I rather pride myself on giving good advice, particularly to my friends."

"The streets of Paris are said to be very unsafe; the Faubourg Saint-Antoine is a very isolated quarter. What road would you advise me to take?"

"Faith," said Quélus, "as the Louvre boatman will doubtless spend the night waiting for you, if I were in your

place, monsieur, I should take the ferry at the Pré-aux-Clercs, turn the tower at the corner, follow the quay up to the Grand-Châtelet, and then reach the Faubourg Saint-Antoine by the Rue de la Tixeranderie. Once at the end of the Rue Saint-Antoine, if you pass the Hôtel des Fournelles without accident, you will probably arrive safe and sound at the mysterious rendezvous of which you have just told us."

"Thanks for your direction, M. de Quélus," said Bussy. "You mention the ferry at the Pre-aux-Clercs, the tower at the corner, the quay up to the Grand-Châtelet, the Rue de la Tixeranderie, and the Rue Saint-Antoine. Nothing can be clearer. You may rest assured I shall not depart an inch from the route."

And saluting the five friends he withdrew, saying in quite a loud voice to Balzac d'Entragues: "Decidedly, Antraguet, we are losing our time with those fellows; it's time to be off."

Livarot and Ribeirac laughed as they followed Bussy and D'Entragues, who walked before them, not forgetting to turn round often.

The minions remained calm; they seemed determined not to understand.

As Bussy was crossing the last salon, in which was stationed Madame de Saint-Luc, who never took her eyes off her husband, Saint-Luc made her a sign, and glanced at the Duc d'Anjou's favorite. Jeanne, with that clear-sightedness which is the privilege of women, understood at once, and running up, stopped the gentleman in his progress.

"Oh, M. de Bussy," said she, "every one is talking of a sonnet of yours, and I am told it is" —

"Against the King, madame?" asked Bussy.

"No, in honor of the Queen. You must repeat it to me."

"With pleasure, madame," said Bussy, and offering her his arm he moved along, reciting the sonnet requested.

During this time, Saint-Luc returned softly to the minions, and heard Quélus saying:

"The animal will not be difficult to stalk, we know his tracks; so, then, at the corner of the Hôtel des Tournelles, near the Porte Saint-Antoine, opposite the Hôtel Saint-Pol."

"And each of us with a lackey?" inquired D'Épernon.

"No, no, Nogaret; no," said Quélus, "let us be alone, and keep our own secret, and do our own work. I hate him, but it

would shame me to have a lackey's stick touch him; he is too much of the gentleman for that."

"Do the whole six of us go out together?" asked Maugiron.

"The whole five, not the whole six of us, by any means," said Saint-Luc.

"True, we had forgotten you had taken a wife. We were looking on you as still a bachelor," said Schomberg.

"And, in fact," continued D'O, "the least we could do would be to let poor Saint-Luc stay with his wife the first night of his marriage."

"You are out there, gentlemen," said Saint-Luc; "it is not my wife that keeps me; though you will agree she 's well worth staying for; it is the King."

"What! the King?"

"Yes, his Majesty has ordered me to escort him back to the Louvre."

The young men looked at him with a smile Saint-Luc vainly tried to understand.

"You see how it is," said Quélus, "the King is so extravagantly fond of you he cannot do without you."

"Besides, we have no need of Saint-Luc," said Schomberg. "Let us leave him, then, to his King and his lady."

"Hum! the beast is formidable," said D'Épernon.

"Bah!" retorted Quélus, "just set me in front of it, give me a good boar-spear, and leave the rest to me."

The voice of Henri was heard calling for Saint-Luc.

"Gentlemen," said he, "you understand, the King is calling for me. Good luck to your hunting and good-by."

And he left them immediately. But instead of going to the King he glided along the walls where there were still spectators and dancers, and reached the door where Bussy was standing, retained by the fair bride, who was doing her best to prevent him from going farther.

"Ah, good evening, M. de Saint-Luc," said the young man. "But — Why, you look quite scared! Do you, perchance, form one of the great hunting-party that is preparing? That would redound to your courage, but scarcely to your chivalry."

"Monsieur," answered Saint-Luc, "I looked scared because I have been seeking you."

"Indeed!"

"And because I was afraid you were gone. My dear

Jeanne," he added, "tell your father to try and detain the King awhile. I must say a few words to M. de Bussy in private."

Jeanne hurried off. All this was a mystery to her; but she yielded, feeling that the matter was important.

"What do you want to say to me, M. de Saint-Luc?" asked Bussy.

"I wanted to say, M. le Comte," replied Saint-Luc, "that if you had any rendezvous this evening you would do well to adjourn it till to-morrow, for the streets of Paris are unsafe, and that, if this rendezvous was likely to lead you in the direction of the Bastile, you would do well to avoid the Hôtel des Tournelles, where there is a nook in which several men could hide. This is what I had to tell you, M. de Bussy. God forbid I should think a man like you could be frightened! I only ask you to reflect on what I have said."

At this moment was heard the voice of Chicot crying:

"Saint-Luc! My little Saint-Luc! come, now, don't try to hide as you are doing. You can see very well that I 'm waiting for you to return to the Louvre."

"Sire, here I am," aswered Saint-Luc, hastening in the direction of Chicot's voice.

Near the jester stood Henri III., to whom a page was already handing his heavy ermine-lined cloak, while another presented thick gloves that reached to the elbow, and a third, the velvet-lined mask.

"Sire," said Saint-Luc, addressing both the Henris at once, "I am about to have the honor of lighting you to your litters."

"Not at all," replied Henri, "Chicot is going his way, and I am going mine. My friends are all scamps, letting me find my way alone to the Louvre, while they are having their fun and frisking about in the mummeries of the carnival. I had counted on them, and this is how they treat me. Now, you understand you cannot let me set out in this style. You are a sober, married man; it is your duty to bring me back safe to my wife. Come along, my friend, come. Ho there! a horse for M. de Saint-Luc — But no, it 's useless," he added, as if on second thought. "My litter is wide; there is room for two."

Jeanne de Brissac had not lost a word of this conversation. She wished to speak, say a word to her husband, warn her father that the King was carrying off her husband; but Saint-

Luc, placing a finger on his lips, indicated the necessity for silence and circumspection.

"*Peste!*" he murmured, "now that I am reconciled with François d'Anjou, I'm not going to quarrel with Henri de Valois. Sire," he added aloud, "here I am, so devoted to your Majesty that if you ordered me to follow you to the end of the world I should do so."

There was a mighty tumult, then mighty genuflexions, then a mighty silence, and all to hear the adieus of the King to Mademoiselle de Brissac and her father. They were charming.

Then the horses pawed the court-yard, the torches cast a red glare on the windows. At length, with a half-laugh and a half-shiver, fled into the shadow and the fog the royal courtiers and the wedding-guests.

Jeanne, now alone with her women, entered her chamber and knelt before the image of a saint to whom she had a particular devotion. Then she asked them to retire and have a collation ready for her husband on his return.

M. de Brissac did more. He sent six guards to wait for the young husband at the gate of the Louvre and escort him home. But, after ten hours' waiting, the guards sent one of their comrades to inform the marshal that all the gates of the Louvre were shut, and that, before the last was closed, the captain of the watch had said:

"You need not wait any longer, it's useless; no person can now leave the Louvre to-night. His Majesty has gone to bed, and every one else is asleep."

The marshal carried this news to his daughter, who declared that she was too anxious to go to bed, and would sit up and wait for her husband.

CHAPTER II.

NOT EVERY ONE THAT OPENS THE DOOR ENTERS THE HOUSE.

THE Porte Saint-Antoine was a sort of stone arch, not unlike the Porte Saint-Denis and the Porte Saint-Martin of the present day, only it was connected on the left with the buildings adjacent to the Bastile, and so was, in some sort, attached to the ancient fortress.

The space on the right between the gate and the Hôtel de

Bretagne was wide, dark, and muddy; but this space was little frequented by day and entirely deserted by night, for nocturnal wayfarers seemed to have made for themselves a road quite close to the fortress, in order to place themselves, to some extent, under the protection of the sentry of the keep, at a time when the streets were dens of cut-throats, and watchmen were almost unknown. If the sentry could not come to their assistance, he would, at least, be able to call for help and frighten the malefactors off by his cries.

Of course, on winter nights, travellers were a good deal more timid than on summer ones.

The night during which the events we have already related, or are about to relate, took place, was so chilly and dark, the sky being hidden by black, low-lying clouds, that it was impossible to get a glimpse of the welcome presence of the sentinel behind the battlements of the royal fortress, who would himself have had great difficulty in making out the people who passed beneath him.

Within the city no house rose in front of the Porte Saint-Antoine. Only huge walls could be discerned: the walls of the Church of Saint-Paul, on the right, and those of the Hôtel des Tournelles, on the left. At the end of this hôtel, in the Rue Saint-Catherine, was the nook of which Saint-Luc had spoken to Bussy.

Then came the block of buildings, situated between the Rue de Jouy and the Rue Saint-Antoine, which, at this period, faced the Rue des Billettes and Sainte Catherine's Church.

Moreover, not a single lantern lit up the part of old Paris which we have just described. On those nights during which the moon took on herself the task of illuminating the earth, the gigantic Bastile arose in all her sombre and motionless majesty, standing out in vigorous relief against the starry vault of heaven. On the other hand, during dark nights, all that could be seen in the place which she occupied was a denser blackness, pierced at intervals by the pale lights of a few windows.

During this night, which had begun with a rather sharp frost, and was to end with a rather heavy snowfall, no sound echoed to the steps of a traveller on the kind of causeway which, as we have mentioned, had been made on the soil by the feet of timid and belated wayfarers, prudently taking a roundabout course for very good reasons.

But, on the other hand, a practised eye would have been able to distinguish in the angle of the wall of Les Tournelles several dark shadows that moved enough to show they belonged to poor devils with human bodies, tasked to their utmost to preserve the natural warmth which their immobility was every moment depriving them of, and yet they seemed to have voluntarily condemned themselves to this same immobility, apparently in expectation of something happening.

The sentry on the tower, who could not see anything in the square on account of the darkness, could not hear anything, either, on account of the low tones in which the conversation of these black shadows was conducted. And still the conversation did not lack a certain interest.

"That madman Bussy was right after all," said one of these shadows. "It is just such a night as we used to have at Warsaw, when King Henri was King of Poland; and if it continue, as was predicted, our skins will crack all over."

"Humbug! Maugiron, you lament like a woman," replied another of the shadows. "It is n't warm, I confess; but draw your cloak over your eyes and stick your hands in your pockets and you won't feel a bit cold."

"Oh, you can speak at your ease, Schomberg," said a third shadow; "it 's easy seeing you 're a German. As for myself, my lips are bleeding and my mustache is stiff with icicles."

"It 's my hands that 's the trouble. I 'll lay a bet with any one I no longer have a hand. Upon my soul, I will."

"Why did n't you bring mamma's muff along with you, my poor Quélus?" replied Schomberg. "The dear woman would have lent it to you, especially if you had told her that you wanted it for the purpose of ridding her of her dear Bussy, whom she loves as the devil does holy-water."

"Ah, good heaven! can't you have patience?" said a fifth voice. "I am pretty sure you 'll soon be complaining that it 's too hot you are."

"Heaven grant that your words turn out true, D'Épernon!" said Maugiron, stamping to get his feet warm.

"It was n't I that spoke," said D'Épernon, "it was D'O. I 'm afraid to utter a word; it might freeze."

"What were you saying?" asked Quélus of Maugiron.

"D'O was saying we 'd be soon too warm, and I answered: 'God grant that your words turn out true!'"

"Well, I fancy God must have heard you, for I see something yonder coming along the Rue Saint-Paul."

"You 're mistaken. Can't be he."

"And why?"

"Because he mentioned another route."

"Would it be so strange if he suspected something and changed it?"

"You don't know Bussy. Where he said he 'd go, he 'll go though the very devil lay in wait to bar his passage."

"Still," answered Quélus, "there are two men coming along."

"Faith, you 're right," repeated two or three voices, recognizing the truth of the statement.

"In that case, let us charge," said Schomberg.

"A moment," said D'Épernon; "we don't want to kill honest citizens or virtuous midwives. Stay! they have stopped."

In fact, at the end of the Rue Saint-Antoine the two persons who had attracted the attention of our five companions had stopped, as if in uncertainty.

"Hah!" said Quélus, "do you think they saw us?"

"What nonsense you 're talking! Why we can hardly see ourselves."

"You 're right," answered Quélus. "Look! they 're turning to the left — they 're stopping before a house — they 're searching."

"Faith, there 's no doubt about it."

"It looks as if they wanted to go in," said Schomberg. "Eh! hold on. Would he be trying to escape us?"

"But it is n't he, since he is to go to the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, while yon fellows, after coming out of the Rue de Saint-Paul, went down the street," answered Maugiron.

"Indeed!" said Schomberg. "And how do you know that your artful friend has n't given you a false route, either casually and carelessly, or maliciously and intentionally?"

"I don't deny it might be so," said Quélus.

This hypothesis made the whole band of gentlemen bound to their feet like a pack of famished hounds. They abandoned their retreat, and, sword in hand, rushed on the two men standing before the door.

One of them had introduced a key into the lock, the door had yielded and was about to open, when the noise made by their assailants compelled the two mysterious night-walkers to raise their heads.

"What does this mean?" asked the smaller of the two, turning to his companion. "Do you think it likely, Aurilly, that we are the object of their attack?"

"I am afraid, monseigneur," answered the person who had just turned the key in the door, "that it looks very much like it. Shall you give your name or keep to your incognito?"

"Armed men! An ambush!"

"Some jealous lover on guard. *Vrai Dieu!* monseigneur, I told you the lady was too beautiful not to be courted."

"In, quick, Aurilly; we can stand a siege better inside than out-of-doors."

"Yes, monseigneur, when there are no enemies in the fortress. But who can tell" —

He had no time to finish. The young gentlemen had cleared a space of about a hundred yards with lightning speed. Quélus and Maugiron, who had followed the wall, threw themselves between the door and those who wanted to enter, so as to cut off their retreat, while Schomberg, D'O, and D'Épernon made ready to attack them in front.

"Death! Death!" cried Quélus, always the most violent of the five.

Suddenly the person who had been called "monseigneur" and asked whether he would preserve his incognito turned to Quélus, advanced a step, and, folding his arms arrogantly:

"I think you said, 'Death!' while addressing a son of France, M. de Quélus," said he, in sombre tones and with sinister eyes.

Quélus recoiled, trembling and thunderstruck, his knees bending under him, his eyes haggard.

"Monseigneur the Duc d'Anjou!" he exclaimed.

"Monseigneur the Duc d'Anjou!" repeated the others.

"Well, gentlemen," retorted François, with a menacing air, "do you still cry: 'Death! Death'?"

"Monseigneur," stammered D'Épernon, "it was a jest; pardon us."

"Monseigneur," said D'O, in turn, "we could not suspect we should meet your Highness at the end of Paris and in such an out-of-the-way quarter as this."

"A jest," replied François, not even deigning to answer D'O; "you have a singular fashion of jesting, M. d'Épernon. Well, I am curious. Since I was not intended to be your target, at whom was your jest aimed?"

"Monseigneur," said Schomberg, respectfully, "we saw Saint-Luc quit the Hôtel de Montmorency and proceed in this direction. That struck us as queer, so we wanted to find out why a husband left his wife on their first wedding-night."

The excuse was plausible, for, in all probability, the Duc d'Anjou would learn the next day that Saint-Luc had not slept at the Hôtel de Montmorency, and this piece of news would coincide with what Schomberg had just said.

"M. de Saint-Luc? You took me for M. de Saint-Luc?"

"Yes, monseigneur," repeated the five companions, in chorus.

"And how long is it since you have been in the habit of mistaking M. de Saint-Luc for me? He is a head taller than I."

"It is true, monseigneur," said Quélus; "but he is exactly the height of M. d'Aurilly, who has the honor of attending you."

"And, besides, the night is very dark, monseigneur," said Maugiron.

"And, seeing a man put a key in a lock, we took him for the principal," murmured D'O.

"Finally," continued Quélus, "monseigneur cannot suppose we had the shadow of an evil intention in his regard, not even of interfering with his pleasures."

While speaking thus and apparently attending to the answers, more or less logical, which the fear and astonishment of the five companions permitted them to make, François, by a skilful strategic manœuvre, had left the threshold of the door, and, followed step by step by Aurilly, his lute-player and ordinary companion during his nocturnal rambles, had already moved so far from the door that it could not be distinguished from the others on either side of it.

"My pleasures!" said he, sourly; "and what makes you think I am taking my pleasure here?"

"Ah, monseigneur, in any case, and no matter what you have come for, pardon us," answered Quélus. "and let us retire."

"Very well; good-by, gentlemen."

"Monseigneur," added D'Épernon, "our well-known discretion will be an assurance to your Highness that" —

The Duc d'Anjou, who was about to withdraw, stopped, and, frowning,

"Your discretion, M. de Nogaret? and who, pray, asks you for your discretion?"

"Monseigneur, we believed that your Highness, alone at this hour and followed by your confidant" —

"You are mistaken. This is what must be believed and what I wish to be believed."

The five gentlemen listened in the deepest and most respectful silence.

"I was going," he resumed, in a slow voice and as if he desired to engrave every one of his words on the memory of his hearers, "I was going to consult the Jew Manasses, who knows how to read the future in a glass and in coffee-grounds. He lives, as you are aware, in the Rue de la Tournelle. On the way, Aurilly perceived you and took you for some archers of the watch making their rounds. And so," he added, with a sort of gayety that was appalling to those who knew the prince's character, "like the genuine consulters of sorcerers that we are, we glided along the walls and slipped into doorways to hide ourselves, if it were possible, from your terrible eyes."

While thus speaking the prince had gradually reached the Rue Saint-Paul and had come to a spot from which he could be heard by the sentries of the Bastile in case of an attack, for knowing his brother's secret and inveterate hatred against him, he was not at all reassured by the respectful apologies of Henri III.'s minions.

"And now that you know what you must believe, and particularly what you must say, adieu, gentlemen. It is needless to warn you that I do not wish to be followed."

All bowed and took their leave of the prince, who turned round several times to follow them with his eye, while taking some steps in the opposite direction.

"Monseigneur," said Aurilly, "I would swear that the people we have just encountered had bad intentions. It is now midnight; we are, as they said, in an out-of-the-way quarter; let us get back immediately to the hôtel, monseigneur; do let us return!"

"No," said the prince, stopping; "let us profit by their departure, on the contrary."

"Your Royal Highness is mistaken," said Aurilly; "they have not departed at all; they have simply come together again, as your Highness can see for yourself, in the retreat

where they were hidden. Do you not see them, monseigneur, in that nook yonder, in the angle of the Hôtel des Tournelles ?"

François looked. Aurilly told only the exact truth. The five gentlemen had, in fact, resumed their position, and it was clear they were discussing a plan interrupted by the prince's arrival ; perhaps they had even posted themselves in this position to spy on the prince and his companion and find out if they were really going to the Jew Manasses.

"Well, now, monseigneur," asked Aurilly, "what do you intend doing ? I will do whatever your Highness orders ; but I do not consider it prudent to remain."

"God's death !" said the prince, "yet it is annoying to have to give up the game."

"I know that well, monseigneur, but the game can be adjourned. I have already had the honor of informing your Highness that the house is hired for a year ; we know the lady lodges on the first story ; we have gained her maid, and have a key that opens her door. With all these advantages, we can wait."

"You are sure the door yielded ?"

"Quite sure ; it yielded to the third key I tried."

"By the way, did you shut it again ?"

"The door ?"

"Yes."

"Undoubtedly, monseigneur."

Notwithstanding the assured tone wherewith Aurilly uttered his answer, we are bound to say he was not at all so certain he had shut the door as that he had opened it. However, his composure left no more room for doubt in the prince's mind in the one case than in the other.

"But," said the prince, "I should not have been sorry to have learned" —

"What they are doing yonder, monseigneur. I can tell you with absolute certainty. They are lying in wait for some one. Your Highness has enemies ; who knows what they might not dare against you ?"

"Well, I consent to go, but I shall return."

"Not to-night, at least, monseigneur. Your Highness must appreciate my anxiety. I see ambushes everywhere, and, certainly, it is natural to feel such terror when I am attending on the first prince of the blood — the heir of the crown whom so many have an interest in depriving of his inheritance."

These last words made such an impression on François that he decided to return immediately; but he did not do so without bitterly cursing this unlucky encounter and promising, in his own mind, to pay off these same gentlemen, whenever he conveniently could, for the discomfort they had caused him.

"Agreed!" said he; "let us return to the hôtel; we are safe to find Bussy there, who must have got back from that infernal wedding. He is sure to have some nice quarrel on his hands, and has killed, or will kill to-morrow morning, some minion or other. That will console me."

"Yes, monseigneur," said Aurilly, "let us return and place our reliance in Bussy. I do not ask better, and, like your Highness, I have the greatest confidence in him in an affair like that."

And they started.

Scarcely had they turned the corner of the Rue de Jouy when our five companions saw a horseman, wrapped in a long cloak, appear at the end of the Rue Tison. His horse's steps resounded harshly and firmly on the frozen ground, and the white plume in his cap was turned to silver by the feeble moonbeams, which were making a last effort to pierce the cloudy sky and the snow-laden atmosphere. He kept a tight and wary hand over his steed, which, notwithstanding the cold, frothed at the mouth, impatient at the slow gait to which it was constrained.

"This time," said Quélus, "we 're sure! It is he!"

"Impossible!" returned Maugiron.

"Why, pray?"

"Because he is alone, and we left him with Livarot, D'Entragues, and Ribeirac. They would not have let him run such a risk."

"It is he, notwithstanding; it is he," said D'Épernon. "Don't you recognize his sonorous 'hum!' and his insolent way of carrying his head? He is alone, beyond a doubt."

"Then," said D'O, "it 's a trap."

"In any case, trap or no trap," said Schomberg, "it is he; and as it is he: *To arms! To arms!*"

It was, indeed, Bussy, who was coming carelessly down the Rue Saint-Antoine, and who had punctually followed the route traced out for him by Quélus. He had, as we have seen, been warned by Saint-Luc, and, in spite of the very natural emotion created by the latter's words, he had dismissed his three friends at the gate of the Hôtel de Montmorency.

This was just one of those bravadoes of which our valorous colonel was so fond. He once said of himself: "I am but a simple gentleman; yet I have the heart of an emperor within my breast, and when I read in the 'Lives of Plutarch' the exploits of the ancient Romans, I feel there is not, in my opinion, a single hero of antiquity whom I cannot imitate in everything he has done."

And, moreover, Bussy had thought that, perhaps, Saint-Luc, whom he did not usually reckon among his friends — and, in fact, he owed the unexpected interest of Saint-Luc in his fortunes to the perplexed position in which the latter was placed — might have given his warning only for the purpose of egging him on to take precautions that would make him the laughing-stock of his enemies, if enemies he had to encounter. Now, Bussy feared ridicule worse than danger. In the eyes of his enemies themselves he had a reputation for courage which could only be upheld on the lofty level it had reached by the maddest adventures. Like a hero out of Plutarch, then, he had sent away his three companions, a doughty escort that would have secured to him the respect of a squadron even, and, all alone, his arms folded under his cloak, without other weapons than his sword and dagger, he rode on to a house where awaited him, not a mistress, as might have been conjectured, but a letter sent him every month, and on the same day, by the Queen of Navarre, in memory of their former affection for each other. So, in fulfilment of a promise he had given his beautiful Marguerite, a promise never broken, he was going for it during the night, unattended, that no one might be compromised.

He had crossed safely the passage from the Rue des Grands-Augustins to the Rue Saint-Antoine, when, on arriving at the top of the Rue Saint-Catherine, his keen, practised eye discerned by the wall in the darkness those human forms which the Duc d'Anjou, not so well informed, was unable to perceive. Besides, a heart truly brave feels at the approach of a known peril a sort of exaltation which sharpens the senses and the intellect to the highest degree.

Bussy counted the number of the black shadows on the gray wall.

"Three, four, five," said he, "without reckoning the lackeys, who no doubt are stationed in another corner, and will dash out at the first cry of their masters. They think highly of

me, it would seem. Still, the devil 's in it, or this is a nice job for a single man! Well, one thing is certain: honest Saint-Luc has not deceived me, and though he were the first to make a hole in my stomach during the scrimmage, I would say to him, 'Thanks for your warning, my friend.'"

So saying, he continued to advance; only his right arm moved freely under his cloak, the clasp of which his left hand, without apparent movement, had unfastened.

It was then that Schomberg shouted: "To arms!" and the cry being repeated by his four comrades, all the gentlemen together rushed on Bussy.

"Ha, gentlemen," said Bussy, in his sharp, quiet voice, "so we would like to kill this poor Bussy? So he is the wild beast, the famous wild boar, we reckoned on hunting, eh? Well, gentlemen, the boar is going to rip up some of you, you may take my word for it; I think you know I am not in the habit of breaking my word."

"We know it," said Schomberg. "But, for all that, none but a very ill-bred person, Seigneur Bussy d'Amboise, would speak to us on horseback when we ourselves are listening to him on foot."

And with that, the young man's arm, covered with white satin, shot out from his cloak, glistening like silver in the moonlight. Bussy could not guess his antagonist's intention, except that it must have been a threatening one, to correspond with the gesture.

And so Bussy was about to answer it in his usual manner, when, just as he was going to plunge the rowels into his horse's flanks, he felt the animal sinking under him. Schomberg, with an adroitness peculiar to him, and already exhibited in the numerous combats in which he had been engaged, young as he was, had hurled a sort of cutlass, whose broad blade was heavier than the handle, and the weapon, after hamstringing the horse, remained in the wound, driven in like a chopper into an oak-branch.

The animal gave an agonizing neigh and fell to the ground.

Bussy, always ready for everything, was on the earth in a flash, sword in hand.

"Ah, you scoundrel!" he cried, "it was my favorite steed; you shall pay me for it."

And as Schomberg approached, hurried along by his courage, and miscalculating the reach of the sword which Bussy held

close to his body, as one might miscalculate the reach of the fangs of a coiled snake, Bussy's arm and sword suddenly sprang forth and wounded him in the thigh.

Schomberg uttered a cry.

"Ha!" said Bussy, "am I a man of my word? One ripped up already. It was Bussy's wrist, not his horse's leg, you ought to have cut, you bungler."

In the twinkling of an eye, while Schomberg was binding his thigh with his handkerchief, Bussy had presented the point of his long blade, now at the face, now at the breast of each of his four other assailants, disdaining to call for aid, that is to say, to recognize he had need of aid. Wrapping his cloak about his left arm and using it as a buckler, he retreated, not to fly, but to gain a wall which he could lean against, so as not to be taken in the rear, — making ten thrusts every minute and feeling sometimes that soft resistance of the flesh which showed that his thrusts had told. Once he slipped and looked instinctively at the ground. It was enough. That instant, Quélus wounded him in the side.

"Touched!" cried Quélus.

"Yes, on the doublet," answered Bussy, who would not even acknowledge the hurt, "the sort of touch that proves the touchers are afraid."

And bounding on Quélus, he engaged him with such vigor that the young man's sword flew ten paces away from his hand. But he could not follow up his victory, for, at that moment, D'O, D'Épernon, and Maugiron attacked him with renewed fury. Schomberg had bandaged his wound, Quélus had picked up his sword. Bussy saw he was going to be surrounded, that he had but a minute to reach the wall, and that, if he did not profit by it, he was lost.

Bussy made a leap backward that put three paces between himself and his assailants; but four swords were at his breast in an instant. And yet it was not too late; with another leap, he had his back against the wall. There he halted, strong as Achilles or as Roland, and smiling at the hail of strokes that beat on his head like a tempest and clashed around him.

Suddenly he felt the perspiration on his forehead, and a cloud passed over his eyes.

He had forgotten his wound, and the symptoms of fainting he now experienced recalled it to him.

"Ah! you are growing weak," cried Quélus, renewing his blows.

"Wait," said Bussy, "here is the proof of it!"

And with the pommel of his sword he struck him on the temple. Quélus sank under the blow.

Then, furious, frenzied as the boar which, after holding the pack at bay, suddenly bounds amongst them, he uttered a terrible cry and rushed forward. D'O and D'Épernon recoiled; Maugiron had raised up Quélus and was holding him in his arms. Bussy broke the sword of Maugiron with his foot and slashed the fore-arm of Épernon. For an instant he was the victor; but Quélus came to himself, Schomberg, though wounded, returned to the lists, and again four swords blazed before his eyes. He gathered all his strength for another retreat, and drew back, step by step, to regain the wall a second time. Already the icy perspiration on his forehead, the hollow ringing in his ears, the painful bloody film that was clouding his eyes, told him that his strength was giving way. The sword no longer followed the line traced out for it by the dimmed intellect. Bussy sought for the wall with his left hand, found it, and its cold feel did him some good; but, to his amazement, the wall yielded. It was a half-open door.

Then Bussy recovered hope, and summoned up all his strength for this supreme moment. For a second his strokes were so quick and violent that all these swords were drawn back or were lowered before him. Then he slipped on the other side of the door, and, turning round, closed it with a violent push of the shoulder. The spring clicked in the lock. It was over. Bussy was out of danger, Bussy was the victor, for Bussy was safe.

Then, with eyes wild with joy, he saw through the narrow grating the pale faces of his foes, heard the furious sword-thrusts at the door, the cries of rage, the mad imprecations. At length, it suddenly seemed to him as if the earth were giving way under his feet, as if the wall were shaking. He advanced three steps and found himself in a court, tottered and fell on the steps of a staircase.

Then he felt nothing more, and it looked to him as if he were descending into the silence and obscurity of the tomb.

CHAPTER III.

HOW IT IS SOMETIMES HARD TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN A DREAM AND THE REALITY.

Before he fell, Bussy had had time to pass his handkerchief under his shirt and buckle his sword-belt over it; this formed a sort of bandage for the raw, burning wound, from which the blood escaped like a jet of flame. But he had already lost enough blood before this to bring about the fainting-fit to which he had succumbed.

However, whether that in a brain over-excited by anger and pain life still held its ground under an appearance of insensibility, or that the swoon had been succeeded by a fever, and this fever had been again succeeded by a swoon, this is what Bussy saw, or thought he saw, during an hour of dream or reality, during a moment of twilight between the shadow of two nights.

He found himself in a chamber furnished with carved wooden furniture, a painted ceiling and tapestry on which numerous figures were embroidered. These individuals were worked in every possible attitude, holding flowers, carrying weapons, and seemed to be making violent efforts to get away from the walls and climb to the ceiling by mysterious paths. Between the two windows stood a woman's portrait, brilliantly lit up. Only it seemed to Bussy that the frame of this picture was exactly like the frame of a door. Bussy, nailed to his bed, apparently by some higher power, deprived of the faculty of moving, with all his senses in abeyance except that of sight, gazed with lack-lustre eyes on all these personages, on the insipid smiles of those who carried flowers and on the comical anger of those who carried swords. Had he seen them before, or was this the first time he had noticed them? His head was too heavy to have any definite idea on the matter.

In a moment the woman in the picture seemed to move out of the frame, and an adorable being, clad in a flowing robe of white wool, such as angels wear, with fair hair falling over her shoulders, eyes black as jet, long, velvety eyelashes, a skin under which you could almost see the crimson current that tinted the rosy cheeks, advanced toward him. This woman was so marvellously beautiful, her outstretched arms were so

ravishing, that Bussy made an effort to rise and throw himself at her feet. But it looked to him as if he were held down by bands like those wherewith the corpse is held down in its tomb, while, disdaining earth, the immaterial soul ascends the skies.

This impression forced him to take note of the bed upon which he was lying: it was apparently one of those magnificent carved couches of the days of François I., hung with white damask embroidered in gold.

At sight of this woman the personages on the wall and ceiling ceased to occupy Bussy's attention, which was entirely devoted to the woman of the picture. He tried to make out if she had left a vacancy in the frame. But a cloud his eyes could not pierce floated before this frame and hid it from view. Then he turned his eyes back to the mysterious apparition and, fixing his gaze on the wonderful woman, he set about composing a compliment to her in verse, as he was in the habit of doing, in such cases, every day.

But suddenly the woman disappeared; an opaque body came between her and Bussy; this body moved clumsily and stretched out its arms as if it were playing blind-man's buff.

Bussy's gorge rose at this conduct, and he flew into such a rage that, if his limbs had been free, he would have flung himself on the importunate visitor; it is but just to say that he tried, but the thing was impossible.

As he was vainly attempting to get out of the bed, to which he seemed chained, the newcomer spoke.

"Well," he said, "is this the end of my journey?"

"Yes, maître," answered a voice the sweetness of which thrilled every fibre in Bussy's heart, "and you can now take off your bandage."

Bussy made an effort to find out if the sweet-voiced woman was actually the woman of the portrait; but the attempt was useless. All he saw before him was the pleasing features of a graceful young man, who, in obedience to the invitation just given him, had taken off the bandage, and who was going round the apartment with a look of bewilderment.

"Devil take the fellow!" thought Bussy.

And he tried to express his thought by word or gesture, but it was impossible for him to do either.

"Ah! now I understand," said the young man, approaching

the bed, "you are wounded, my dear monsieur, are you not? Do not be uneasy, we will try to cure you."

Bussy wanted to reply, but understood this was out of the question. His eyes swam in an icy moisture, and he felt in his fingers the prickings as it were of a thousand pins.

"Is the wound mortal?" asked the sweet voice which had already spoken, — the voice of the lady of the picture, — in a tone of such heartfelt and pained interest that the tears came to Bussy's eyes.

"Upon my word, I cannot say as yet," answered the young man; "but see, he has fainted!"

It was all Bussy could comprehend. He thought he heard the rustling of a robe moving away. Next, it seemed to him as if he felt a red-hot iron in his side, and all that was still alive in him vanished into darkness.

Later on, Bussy found it impossible to fix the duration of this fainting-fit.

But, when he returned to consciousness, a cold wind was blowing over his face; hoarse and discordant voices were grating on his ears; he opened his eyes to see if it were the people of the tapestry who were quarrelling with the people on the ceiling; and, in hopes that the portrait was still there, he turned his head in all directions, but there was no tapestry, nor ceiling, either; and, as for the portrait, it was gone completely. All Bussy could perceive on his right was a man in a gray coat and apron, which was tucked up and stained with blood; on his left a monk of St. Genevieve, who was holding up his head; and, in front of him, an old woman mumbling prayers.

The wandering eyes of Bussy soon fastened on a pile of stones, also in front of him, and, looking upward, to measure the height, he thereupon recognized the Temple, flanked with its walls and towers; above the Temple, the cold, white sky, slightly tinted by the rising sun.

Bussy was purely and simply in the street, or rather on the border of a ditch, and the ditch was that of the Temple.

"Ah, thanks, my worthy friends, for the trouble you must have taken in bringing me hither. I had need of air, but it would have been easy to have given me all I wanted of it by opening the windows, and I should have felt more comfortable on my bed of white damask and gold than on this bare ground. No matter. You will find in my pouch, unless you have already

"YOU ARE WOUNDED, MY DEAR MONSIEUR, ARE YOU NOT?"

paid yourselves, which would have been only prudent, a score of gold crowns or so; take them, my friends, take them."

"But, my good gentleman," said the butcher, "we have not been put to the trouble of bringing you here. Here you were, sure enough, beyond a yea or a nay. And here we came on you at daybreak, as we were passing."

"The devil! You don't say so!" returned Bussy. "And was the young doctor here, too?"

The bystanders looked at one another.

"He is still a little delirious," said the monk, shaking his head. Then, returning to Bussy,

"My son," said he, "I think you would do well to make your confession."

Bussy looked at the monk with a bewildered air.

"There was no doctor, poor dear young man," said the old woman. "There you were, alone and deserted, as cold as death. There is a little snow, and you can see your place is traced out in black on the ground."

Bussy cast a look on his aching side, remembered he had been wounded, slipped his hand under his doublet, and felt his handkerchief over the same spot, firmly kept in place by the sword-belt.

"It 's queer," said he.

His new friends, profiting by the permission he had given them, were already dividing his purse, to the accompaniment of many an expression of sorrow for his condition.

"Everything is all right now, my friends," said he, when the division was made; "now conduct me to my hôtel."

"Oh, surely, surely, poor dear," said the old woman; "the butcher is strong, and — then he has a horse; you could ride it."

"Is that true?" asked Bussy.

"As true as heaven's above us!" answered the butcher, "and I and my horse are at your service, my good gentleman."

"That 's all very well, my son," said the monk; "but while the butcher is looking up his horse you had better confess."

"What 's your name?" asked Bussy.

"My name is Brother Gorenflot," replied the monk.

"Well, Brother Gorenflot," said Bussy, sitting up, "I hope the time for confession is n't yet come. And so, as I am very cold, I am in a hurry to get to my hôtel, where I could warm myself."

"And how is your hôtel called?"

"The Hôtel de Bussy."

"What!" cried the bystanders, "the Hôtel de Bussy?"

"Yes; anything astonishing in that?"

"You belong, then, to the household of M. de Bussy?"

"I am M. de Bussy himself."

"Bussy!" shouted the crowd, "the Seigneur de Bussy! The scourge of the minions! Hurrah for Bussy!"

And the young man was seized and carried on the shoulders of his admirers to his hôtel, while the monk went away, counting his share of the twenty crowns, and, with a shake of the head, murmuring:

"So it's that rascal Bussy — I don't wonder now that he did not care to confess."

When Bussy was back again in his hôtel he summoned his surgeon, who thought the wound not serious.

"Tell me," said Bussy, "has not the wound been dressed?"

"Upon my word," said the doctor, "I cannot be positive, although, after all, it looks as if it might have been."

"And," continued Bussy, "was it serious enough to have produced delirium?"

"Certainly."

"The devil!" thought Bussy, "was that tapestry, with its figures carrying flowers and arms, all delirium? And the frescoed ceiling and the carved bed, hung with white damask and gold, and the portrait between the two windows, the adorable blonde woman with the black eyes, the doctor playing blind-man's buff, whom I should have liked to jump on, — was all that delirium? And was there nothing real except my scuffle with the minions? Where did I fight, anyway? Ah, now I remember, it was near the Bastile, opposite the Rue Saint-Paul. I planted myself against a wall, and the wall was a door, and the door gave way, luckily. I shut it with great difficulty and found myself in an alley. Then I don't remember anything until the moment I fainted. Was all the rest a dream? That is the question. Ah! and my horse, by the way? It must have been found dead at the place. Doctor, be kind enough to call some one."

The doctor called a servant.

On inquiry, Bussy learned that the poor beast had dragged itself, bleeding and mutilated, to the gateway of the hôtel, and was found there at daybreak, neighing. The alarm was

immediately spread through the household. All Bussy's servants, who worshipped their master, started to search for him, and most of them had not yet returned.

"The portrait, at least," said Bussy, "must have surely been a dream. No doubt of that. How could a portrait have moved from its frame for no other purpose than to chat with a doctor who had his eyes bandaged? I must be mad. And yet, when I recall it to mind, this portrait had ravishing eyes, had" —

Bussy made an effort to remember the characteristics of the portrait, and, as he passed in review all the details, a voluptuous thrill, that thrill of love that warms and animates the heart, shot through his inflamed breast.

"Could it have all been a dream?" cried Bussy while the doctor was dressing his wound. "*Mordieu!* it's not possible; there are no such dreams.

"Let me go over the whole business again."

And Bussy began to repeat for the hundredth time:

"I was at the ball; Saint-Luc warned me I should be attacked near the Bastile; Antraguet, Ribeirac, and Livarot were with me. I bade them good-by. I went along the quay, the Grand-Châtelet, etc., etc., etc. At the Hôtel des Tournelles, I saw that people were lying in wait for me. They made a rush on me, lamed my horse. We had a rough tussle. I entered an alley; I was taken ill — and then? Ah, it's that *and then* that gets the best of me; after that *and then*, a fever, delirium, a dream, *and then* —

"And then," he added, with a sigh, "I found myself on the slope of a ditch, one of the Temple ditches, where a monk of St. Genevieve wanted to confess me. All the same, I *will* know all about the affair," continued Bussy, after a moment's silence, which he spent in trying to recall his remembrances. "I say, doctor, shall I have to keep my room for a fortnight on account of this scratch, as I did the last time?"

"That depends. You can't walk, can you?" asked the doctor.

"You 'll see if I can't. I think I have quicksilver in my legs."

"Take a few steps, then."

Bussy jumped from the bed, and proved the truth of his confident boast by walking quickly round the room.

"You 'll do," said the doctor, "provided you don't ride, or walk thirty miles the first day."

"Capital!" cried Bussy, "you're the right kind of a doctor! Still, I saw another one last night. Oh, yes, I saw him, every feature of him is stamped on my mind, and should I ever meet him, I shall recognize him, you may take my word for it."

"My dear lord," said the doctor, "I should not advise you to search for him; there is always a little fever after a sword-thrust; surely you ought to know that, seeing that this is your twelfth."

"Good heavens!" cried Bussy, suddenly, struck with a new idea, for his mind was entirely full of the mysterious events of the preceding night, "what if my dream began outside the door instead of inside it? What if there was no alley, no staircase, no bed of white damask and gold, and no portrait? What if those wretches, believing me dead, carried me neatly to the ditches of the Temple in order to divert the suspicions of any chance spectator of the scene? Then, most assuredly, I must have dreamt all the rest. Saints in heaven! if these ruffians have been the means of bringing me a dream that is racking, torturing, killing me, I call God to witness that I shall disembowel every soul of them to the very last."

"My dear lord," said the doctor, "if you care to have a speedy cure you must not excite yourself in this fashion."

"Always making an exception, however, of my honest friend Saint-Luc," went on Bussy, without listening to the doctor. "He is quite a different sort of person; he has acted like a friend to me. Consequently, I must pay him my first visit."

"But not before five in the evening," said the doctor.

"As you like," answered Bussy; "but I assure you it is not going out and seeing somebody, but staying in and seeing nobody, that will retard my recovery."

"What you say is likely enough," said the doctor; "you are, in every respect, a very queer patient. Act as you wish, monseigneur. I have only one thing more to advise: do not get another sword-thrust until you are cured of this."

Bussy promised the doctor to do his best to follow his counsel; and, having dressed, he called for his litter and was carried to the Hôtel de Montmorency.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW MADAME DE SAINT-LUC SPENT HER WEDDING-NIGHT.

A HANDSOME cavalier and perfect gentleman was this Louis de Clermont, better known as Bussy d'Amboise, whom his cousin, Brantôme, has placed in the ranks of the great captains of the sixteenth century. None, for a long time before him, had made more glorious conquests. Kings and princes sought his friendship. Queens and princesses sent him their sweetest smiles. Bussy had succeeded La Mole in the affections of Marguerite of Navarre; and the good Queen, with the tender heart, needing, no doubt, to be consoled, after the death of the favorite, whose career we have described, had committed so many extravagant follies for the sake of the brave and comely Bussy that her husband, Henri, who did not usually bother his head about that sort of things, was ruffled, while François d'Anjou would never have forgiven the love of his sister for Bussy, but that her love for Bussy had gained him over to his interests. Here again the prince sacrificed his enmity to that secret and wavering ambition which was fated to bring him so many troubles and so little real fruit.

But, amid all his successes in war, gallantry, and ambition, Bussy's soul was unmoved by any human weakness, and the man who had never known fear had never, until the period we have reached, known love, either. The emperor's heart which, as he said himself, throbbed in the gentleman's breast, was pure and virginal, like unto the diamond, as yet untouched by the hand of the lapidary, when it leaves the mine where it has ripened beneath the gaze of the sun. Consequently, there was no room in Bussy's mind for ideas that would have rendered him still more like a real emperor. He believed himself worthy of a crown, and was, assuredly, worthier than the wearer of the crown he had in his mind.

Henri III. had offered him his friendship, and Bussy had refused it, saying that the friends of a king are his lackeys, and often something worse; so, such a condition by no means suited him. Henri swallowed the affront in silence, an affront rendered still more bitter when Bussy chose Duc François for his master. It is true Duc François was Bussy's master somewhat in the sense in which the lion-keeper is the master of

the lion. He serves and feeds the lion for fear the lion might eat him. Such a lion was this Bussy whom François egged on to champion his private quarrels. Bussy saw this clearly enough, but he rather liked the part of champion.

He had made for himself a line of conduct not unlike that described in the motto of the Rohans: "Cannot be king, scorn to be prince, Rohan I am." Bussy said to himself: "I cannot be King of France, but M. le Duc d'Anjou can and would be. I will be the King of M. le Duc d'Anjou."

And, in fact, he was.

When Saint-Luc's people saw the terrible Bussy coming toward the building they ran to notify M. de Brissac.

"Is M. de Saint-Luc at home?" asked Bussy, thrusting his head through the curtains as his litter entered the gateway.

"No, monsieur," answered the concierge.

"Where shall I find him?"

"I do not know, monsieur," said the dignified servitor. "Indeed, we are very anxious, for M. de Saint-Luc has not returned to the hôtel since yesterday evening."

"Oh, nonsense!" returned Bussy, astounded.

"It is as I have the honor to tell you."

"And Madame de Saint-Luc?"

"Oh, as to Madame de Saint-Luc it is another matter."

"She is in the hôtel?"

"Yes."

"Be good enough to tell her I shall be charmed if she permit me to pay her my respects."

Five minutes later the messenger returned, saying Madame de Saint-Luc would receive M. de Bussy with pleasure.

Bussy climbed down from his velvet cushions and ascended the grand staircase. When the young man entered the reception-room, Jeanne de la Cossé ran to meet him. She was very pale, and her hair, dark as a raven's wing, gave that paleness the tone of ivory when it is turning yellow. Her eyes were reddened by sorrow and sleeplessness, and the silvery furrow of a recent tear could be traced on her cheek. Bussy, who at first was inclined to smile at this paleness and who was preparing a compliment to these heavy eyes adapted to the occasion, stopped improvising when he saw such signs of real grief.

"You are welcome, M. de Bussy," said the young woman, "notwithstanding the fear your presence arouses in me."

"What do you mean, madame?" asked Bussy, "and how could my presence betoken a misfortune?"

"Ah! there was a meeting between you and M. de Saint-Luc last night, was there not? Come, confess it."

"Between me and Saint-Luc?" repeated Bussy, astonished.

"Yes, he left me to speak to you. You belong to the Duc d'Anjou, he to the King; you had a quarrel. Hide nothing from me, monsieur, I beseech you. You must understand my anxiety. It is true he left with the King, but he must have returned and met you. Confess the truth. What has become of M. de Saint-Luc?"

"Madame," said Bussy, "this is really marvellous. I was expecting you to ask about my wound, and you question me about" —

"M. de Saint-Luc wounded you! He has fought, then!" cried Jeanne. "Ah, you see now" —

"No, madame, he has not fought at all, certainly not with me, and, thank God, it was not my dear friend Saint-Luc who wounded me. On the contrary, he did all he could to prevent my being wounded. Why, he must have told you we are now like Damon and Pythias!"

"He told me! Why, how could he, since I have not seen him since?"

"Have not seen him since? Then what your concierge told me is true?"

"What did he tell you?"

"That Saint-Luc has not returned since eleven o'clock yesterday evening. You have not seen your husband, you say, since eleven o'clock yesterday evening?"

"Alas! no."

"But where can he be?"

"That is what I am asking you."

"For goodness' sake, madame, relate what happened," said Bussy, who suspected what had occurred, "it must be very droll."

The poor woman looked at Bussy with the greatest astonishment.

"Oh, no," Bussy continued hastily, "what I mean is that it is very sad. I have lost a good deal of blood and am not in possession of all my faculties. Tell me, madame, your lamentable story. I am anxious to hear it."

And Jeanne related all that she knew; namely, the order

given by Henri to Saint-Luc to attend him, the closing of the Louvre gates, the answer of the guards, and the continued absence of her husband afterward.

"Ha!" said Bussy, "now I understand it all."

"What! you understand it?" exclaimed Jeanne.

"Yes; his Majesty carried Saint-Luc to the Louvre, and once inside the Louvre, he has been unable to get out."

"And why has he been unable to get out?"

"Oh!" said Bussy, much embarrassed, "you are now asking me to reveal state secrets."

"But," said the young woman, "I went to the Louvre. and my father also."

"Well?"

"Well, the guards answered they did not know what we meant, and that M. de Saint-Luc must have returned home."

"It is only surer than ever M. de Saint-Luc is in the Louvre," said Bussy.

"You think so?"

"Most certainly, and, if you wish, you can be equally certain on your side."

"How?"

"By seeing for yourself."

"Is that possible, then?"

"Certainly."

"But it is useless for me to go to the palace. I should be sent away with the same words I heard before. For, if he is there, why should I be prevented from seeing him?"

"Would you like to enter the Louvre?"

"For what purpose?"

"To see Saint-Luc."

"But if he is not there?"

"Why, *mordieu!* I tell you he is there; I 'm sure of it."

"That is strange!"

"No, it's royal."

"So, then, you can enter the Louvre?"

"Certainly. I am not Saint-Luc's wife."

"You confound me."

"Even so. Come!"

"But what is your meaning? You claim the wife of Saint-Luc cannot enter the Louvre, and yet you want to bring me to it along with you!"

"Not at all, madame; it is not Saint-Luc's wife I want to bring with me — A woman! You make me blush!"

"Then you are laughing at me, and, considering my distress, you are very cruel."

"Ah, no! dear lady. Just listen to me: You are twenty, your eyes are black, you are tall and slim, you resemble my youngest page; you understand? — the pretty lad who looked so well in his cloth of gold costume, yesterday evening?"

"Oh, what nonsense, M. de Bussy!" cried Jeanne, blushing.

"But listen. I have no other means than the one I proposed. Take it or leave it. Do you want to see Saint-Luc or do you not?"

"Oh, I would give the world to see him!"

"Well, then, I promise that you 'll see him without giving anything."

"Yes — but" —

"Oh, I have told you the only way."

"Then, M. de Bussy, I will do what you propose; you tell the boy I want one of his dresses, and I shall send one of my women for it."

"No, I have nine new ones at home I had made for those scamps for the Queen-mother's next ball. I 'll select the one I think best suited to your figure and send it; then you will meet me at a place agreed on; let it be, if you like, at the corner of the Rue des Provins in the Rue Saint-Honoré; from there" —

"From there?"

"Well, from there we 'll go to the Louvre together."

Jeanne burst out laughing and held out her hand to Bussy.

"Forgive me my suspicions," said she.

"With all my heart. You will gratify me with an adventure that will make all Europe laugh. I am the obliged party."

And, taking leave of the young woman, he returned home to make his preparations for the masquerade.

That night, at the appointed hour, Bussy and Madame de Saint-Luc met at the top of the Barrière des Sergents. If the young woman had not worn his page's costume, Bussy would not have recognized her. She was adorable in her disguise. Both, after exchanging a few words, proceeded to the Louvre.

At the end of the Rue des Fosses Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois they met a large party. This party filled the entire street and barred their passage.

Jeanne was frightened. Bussy recognized by the torches the Duc d'Anjou's arquebusiers, and the prince himself could be recognized anywhere by the piebald horse he always rode and the white velvet cloak he usually wore.

"Ah," said Bussy, turning to Jeanne, "so you were puzzled, my fair page, to know how you were to enter the Louvre! You may rest easy now; you shall enter it in triumph."

"Ho, monseigneur!" shouted Bussy, with all the power of his lungs, to the Duc d'Anjou.

The call penetrated the air, and, despite the tramping of horses and the hum of voices, reached the prince, who turned round.

"What! Bussy?" he cried, delighted. "I was afraid they had killed you, and was going to your house in the Rue de Grenelle."

"Faith, monseigneur," said Bussy, without even thanking the prince for this mark of attention, "if I am not dead, it is nobody's fault except my own. In good truth, monseigneur, you get me into pleasant situations, nice pitfalls, and then leave me there. Yesterday night, after that ball of Saint-Luc, I got among regular cut-throats. There was not another Angevin with me, and I give you my word of honor they have drained every drop of blood in my body."

"God's death, Bussy, they'll pay for the blood you lost with every drop of their own!"

"Yes, you say that," said Bussy, with his usual freedom, "and you'll have a smile for the first of them you meet. If only you showed your teeth when you smiled; but you keep your lips too tight for that."

"Well," returned the prince, "follow me to the Louvre and you shall see."

"Stay, monseigneur. I am not going to the Louvre if it is to receive any insults. That may do very well for princes of the blood and for minions, not for me."

"Rest easy, I have taken the matter to heart."

"Do you promise that the reparation will be ample?"

"I promise you'll have satisfaction. You are still hesitating, it seems?"

"Monseigneur, I know you so well."

"Come, I tell you; we'll talk the matter over."

"Nothing could be better for your business than this,"

whispered Bussy in the countess' ear; "there will be a scandalous quarrel between these good brothers, who detest each other, and, during the scene, you will easily find Saint-Luc."

"Well, now," said the prince, "have you decided, or do you require me to pledge you my honor as a prince?"

"Oh, no," answered Bussy, "that would only bring me misfortune. Well, after all, I belong to you, and, come what may, I know how, if insulted, to avenge myself."

And Bussy joined the prince, and his new page, following his master as closely as possible, kept immediately behind him.

"Avenge yourself? No, no," said the prince, in reply to this threat of Bussy. "That shall be my concern, my brave gentleman. I take the office of avenging you on myself. Listen," he added in a low voice, "I know your assassins."

"Bah!" retorted Bussy, "your Highness is n't likely to have taken the trouble of making inquiries."

"What is more, I saw them."

"Saw them?" said Bussy, astonished.

"At a spot where I had some affair on hand myself — at the Porte Saint-Antoine; they met me and were near killing me in your place. Ah! I never imagined it was for you they were lying in wait, the brigands! But for that" —

"Well, but for that?"

"Had you your new page with you?" asked the prince, breaking off in his threat.

"No, monseigneur, I was alone. And you, monseigneur?" said Bussy.

"I was with Aurilly; and why were you alone?"

"Because having got the name of the 'brave Bussy' I want to keep it."

"And they wounded you?" asked the prince, with his usual quickness in responding by a feint to a thrust aimed at him.

"Listen," said Bussy. "I do not wish to give them the joy of knowing it, but I have a neat little gash in my side."

"Ah, the wretches!" cried the prince. "Aurilly was right enough when he said they had evil designs."

"What!" said Bussy, "you saw the ambush? You were with Aurilly, who plays with the sword almost as well as he does with the lute! He told your Highness these men had bad designs, and you were two, and they were only five, and yet you never thought of staying and coming to my help!"

"But what was to be done? How was I to know the ambush was intended for you?"

"*Mort diable!* as Charles IX. used to say. When you recognized King Henri's friends, you must surely have had some idea that they were on the look-out for some of your friends. Now, as there are few people except myself who have the courage to be your friends, it ought not to have been difficult for you to guess that I was their object."

"Yes, perhaps you're right, my dear Bussy," said François; "but I never thought of all that."

"Of a piece with the rest!" sighed Bussy, as if in these words he found all that was necessary to express what he thought of his master.

They arrived at the Louvre. The Duc d'Anjou was received by the captain and gate-keepers at the wicket. The orders regulating the entrance were of the strictest; but it may be easily imagined these orders did not affect the next man in the realm to the King. The prince, then, was soon lost in the archway of the drawbridge with all his suite.

"Monseigneur," said Bussy, when they had reached the court of honor, "you can now have it out with the King, and remember the solemn promise you made me. I have to go to speak to a person."

"You're not leaving me, Bussy?" asked the prince, uneasily, for he had counted somewhat on the presence of this gentleman.

"I must, but do not let that trouble you. Rest assured that if I hear the slightest noise I shall be back. Shout, monseigneur, shout, *mordieu!* shout so that I may hear you. If I don't hear you shouting, depend upon it I shall not return."

Then, profiting by the entrance of the prince into the grand hall, he slipped away, followed by Jeanne, into the other apartments.

Bussy knew the Louvre as well as his own hôtel. After going up a private staircase and passing through two or three lonely corridors he reached a sort of antechamber.

"Wait for me here," said he to Jeanne.

"Good heavens! you're not going to leave me by myself?" exclaimed the young woman in terror.

"It can't be helped; I must prepare the way for your entrance."

CHAPTER V.

HOW MADAME DE SAINT-LUC SPENT HER SECOND WEDDING-NIGHT DIFFERENTLY FROM HER FIRST.

Bussy went straight to the armory of which Charles IX. used to be so fond. By a new arrangement it had been turned into a sleeping-room for Henri III., who had furnished it to suit his own fancy. Charles IX., the hunter-King, the blacksmith-King, the poet-King, had filled this chamber with weapons, arquebuses, horns, manuscript, books, and griping-presses. Henri III. had furnished it with two beds in velvet and satin, licentious pictures, relics, scapularies blessed by the Pope, perfumed sachets from the East, and a collection of the finest fencing-swords that could be discovered.

Bussy knew well Henri could not be in this chamber, as his brother had asked for an audience in the gallery, but he knew also that, next to the King's bedroom, was the apartment of Charles IX.'s nurse, which had become that of Henri III.'s favorite. Now, as Henri III. was very fickle in his friendships, this apartment had been successively occupied by Saint-Mégrin, Maugiron, D'O, D'Épernon, Quélus, and Schomberg, and was, in Bussy's opinion, likely to be occupied at the present moment by Saint-Luc, for whom the King, as we have seen, experienced so great a revival of affection that he had carried the young man off from his wife.

Henri III. was a strangely organized being, at once futile and profound, timid and brave; always bored, always restless, always a dreamer, he could not exist except in a continuous state of mental distraction; in the daytime, it was noise, gaming, physical exercises, mummeries, masquerades, intrigues; at night, illuminations, gossip, prayer, or debauchery. In fact, Henri III. is almost the only personage of his character we find in the modern world. Henri III., an antique hermaphrodite, should have seen the light in some city of the Orient, amid a crowd of mutes, slaves, eunuchs, icoglans, philosophers, sophists, and his reign ought to have marked an era of effeminate debauchery and unknown follies between the times of Nero and Heliogabalus.

Now, Bussy, suspecting Saint-Luc was in the nurse's apartment, knocked at the ante-chamber common to both rooms.

The captain of the guards opened it.

"Monsieur de Bussy!" cried the astonished officer.

"Yes, it is I, my dear M. de Nancey," said Bussy. "The King wants to speak to M. de Saint-Luc."

"Very well," answered the captain, "some one inform M. de Saint-Luc that the King would speak with him."

Bussy flashed a glance at the page through the half-open door. Then, turning to M. de Nancey:

"But pray, what is my poor Saint-Luc doing at present?" asked Bussy.

"Playing with Chicot, monsieur, and waiting for the return of the King, who is holding an audience with M. le Duc d'Anjou."

"Would you be kind enough to allow my page to wait for me here?" asked Bussy of the captain of the guards.

"With great pleasure."

"Come in, Jean," said Bussy to the young woman, and he pointed to the recess of a window, whither she went at once.

She had hardly taken her place there when Saint-Luc entered. M. de Nancey retired to a distance.

"What does the King want with me?" said Saint-Luc, looking sour and morose. "Ah, it is you, M. de Bussy?"

"Myself and no other, my dear Saint-Luc, and first of all" — He lowered his voice.

"— first of all, let me thank you for the service your rendered me."

"Oh, that was quite natural," said Saint-Luc; "it went against my grain to look on while a gallant gentleman like you was being assassinated. I was afraid you were killed."

"I was within an inch of it, but, in such a case, an inch is as good as a mile."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I got out of the trouble with a neat little sword-thrust, which I have repaid with interest, I think, to D'Épernon and Schomberg. As for Quélus, he ought to bless the thickness of his skull. It is one of the hardest I ever encountered."

"Tell me all about it; it will distract me," said Saint-Luc, yawning as if he would dislocate his jaws.

"I have n't time at present, my dear Saint-Luc. Besides, I came for quite a different object. You are rather bored here, I fancy."

"Royally bored; that tells everything."

"Well, I have come to put a little life in you. What the devil! one good turn deserves another."

"You are right, and you are doing me as great a service, at least, as I have done you. Ennui is just as deadly as a sword-thrust; it takes longer to finish you, but it's surer."

"Poor Count!" said Bussy, "you are a prisoner, then, as I suspected?"

"The closest prisoner in the kingdom. The King pretends that no one amuses him as I do. The King is really very kind, for since yesterday I have made more grimaces at him than his monkey, and told him more unmannerly truths than his jester."

"Well, now, let us think a little; is there nothing I can do for you? You know I have just offered you my services."

"Certainly there is," said Saint-Luc; "you might go to my house, or rather De Brissac's, and reassure my poor wife, who must be very uneasy and must undoubtedly regard my conduct as strange as it well could be."

"What shall I tell her?"

"Oh, *pardieu!* tell her what you have seen; tell her I'm a prisoner, a prisoner confined to the guard-room; tell her that ever since yesterday the King has been talking to me of friendship like Cicero, who wrote on it, and of virtue like Socrates, who practised it."

"And how do you answer him?" asked Bussy, laughing.

"*Morbleu!* I tell him that, as far as regards friendship, I am a bear, and, as far as regards virtue, I am a blackguard. All which does n't hinder him from repeating, ever and anon, with a sigh: 'Ah! Saint-Luc, is friendship, then but a chimera? Ah! Saint-Luc, is virtue, then, but a name?' Only, after saying it in French, he says it again in Latin, and over again in Greek."

At this sally, the page, to whom Saint-Luc had so far not paid the slightest attention, burst out laughing.

"But what can you expect, my dear friend? He hopes to touch your heart. *Bis repetita placent;* with the greater reason, *ter.* But is this all I can do for you?"

"Yes, it is, egad! or, at least, I'm afraid it is."

"Then, it has been done already."

"Done already? How?"

"I suspected what happened, and told your wife, the first thing"

"And what was her answer?"

"She would not believe me. But," added Bussy, glancing at the window recess, "I expect she will, at last, be convinced by the actual evidence. Ask me, then, something else, something difficult, impossible even; that is, the sort of thing I should like to accomplish."

"Then, dear Bussy, borrow for the nonce the gentle Knight Astolfo's hippogriff, and on its back fly to one of my windows; then will I mount behind you and you shall waft me away to my wife. You shall be at perfect liberty, if your mind that way incline, to continue your journey to the moon afterward."

"My dear, I can do something far easier, I can bring the hippogriff to your wife and have your wife come and find you."

"Here?"

"Yes, here."

"In the Louvre?"

"In the Louvre even. Would not that be still more amusing?"

"*Mordieu!* I should think so!"

"You would not feel bored any longer?"

"You may bet your life on it, I should n't."

"For you have been bored, you told me?"

"You ask Chicot. I have a horror of him, and proposed to exchange a few sword-thrusts with him. The rascal got so angry that it was enough to make one die with laughing. And yet, I did not move an eyebrow, I give you my word for it. But if this thing last, I shall kill him outright, to provide myself with some sort of recreation, or else get him to kill me."

"Plague take it man, don't play that game! You know Chicot is no bungler with his tools. You would be a confounded sight more bored in your coffin than you are in your prison, depend upon it."

"Faith, I don't know about that."

"I say!" laughed Bussy, "what if I were to give my page to you?"

"To me?"

"Yes; he 's a wonderful lad."

"Thanks," said Saint-Luc, "pages are my abomination. The King offered to send for my favorite one, and I declined his offer. You can give him to the King, who is rearranging his household. With me it 's different: as soon as I leave here, I

intend doing as they did at Chenonceaux at the time of the open-air festival — I 'll have none but women among my attendants, and, what 's more, I 'll design their costumes."

"Pshaw!" persisted Bussy; "can't you give him a trial?"

"Bussy," said Saint-Luc, annoyed, "this is no time for bantering me."

"You won't let me persuade you?"

"No, I say!"

"When I tell you I know what you want?"

"No, no, no, no, no a hundred times!"

"Ho there! come hither, page."

"*Mordieu!*" shouted Saint-Luc.

The page left the window, and came, blushing like a peony.

"Good heavens!" gasped Saint-Luc, astounded at discovering Jeanne in Bussy's livery.

"Now," asked Bussy, "shall I send him away?"

"No, no, *vrai Dieu*, no!" cried Saint-Luc. "Ah, Bussy, Bussy, the friendship I owe you shall be eternal!"

"Take care, Saint-Luc; though they can't hear you they can see you."

"You 're right," said the latter, and, after advancing two steps to meet his wife, he took three steps backward. It was just as well he did so. M. de Nancey, astonished at the pantomime enacted before his eyes, was beginning to pay attention to the too expressive gestures of Saint-Luc, when a great noise, coming from the glass gallery, diverted him from his purpose.

"Ah, good heavens! the King is quarrelling with some one, if I am not greatly mistaken," cried M. de Nancey.

"I 'm really afraid he is," answered Bussy, pretending to be uneasy. "I wonder is it with M. d. Anjou? you know I came with him."

The captain buckled on his sword and started for the gallery, where, in fact, there was an altercation loud enough to pierce the walls and roof.

"Say, don't you think I have managed pretty well?" said Bussy, turning to Saint-Luc.

"What is it all about?" asked the latter.

"Only the King and Anjou tearing each other to pieces, and as that must be a splendid spectacle, I must not lose any of it. You had better profit by the scrimmage, not by flight, the King would be sure to follow you; but by hiding away in

some secure place the pretty page I am giving you; is it possible to do so?"

"Yes, *pardieu!* and if it were n't, I 'd make it possible. But, luckily, I am pretending to be ill and keeping my room."

"In that case, good-by, Saint-Luc. Madame, do not forget me in your prayers."

And Bussy, delighted at having tricked Henri III., passed out of the ante-chamber and entered the gallery, where the King, red with anger, was swearing to the prince, pale with rage, that in the scene on the preceding night Bussy was the challenger.

"I assert, sire," shouted the Duc d'Anjou, "that D'Épernon, Schomberg, D'O, Maugiron, and Quélus lay in wait for him at the Hôtel des Tournelles."

"Who told you so?"

"I saw them with my own eyes, sire."

"And in the darkness, too? Why, the night was as black as pitch."

"True. And so it was not by their faces I recognized them."

"By what, then? their shoulders?"

"No, sire, by their voices."

"They spoke to you?"

"Better than that, they took me for Bussy and charged on me."

"On you?"

"Yes, on me."

"And what were you doing at the Porte Saint-Antoine?"

"What is that to you?"

"I want to know. I am in an inquisitive mood to-day."

"I was going to Manasses."

"To Manasses the Jew!"

"You go to Ruggieri, the poisoner, and think nothing of it."

"I go where I like; I am the King."

"What you say is better calculated to sicken a person than to answer him."

"Besides, as I said already, Bussy was the challenger."

"Bussy?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"At Saint-Luc's ball."

"Bussy challenged five men? What nonsense! Bussy is brave, but Bussy is not a madman."

"*Par la Mordieu!* I tell you I heard the challenge myself. Moreover, he is just the kind to do such a thing, since, in spite of all you say, he has wounded Schomberg in the thigh, D'Épernon in the arm, and has almost killed Quélus."

"Ah, indeed!" answered the prince; "he told me nothing of that. I must congratulate him."

"Well, I," said the King, "do not purpose congratulating anybody; but I am very decided on making an example of this swash-buckler."

"And I," retorted Anjou, "whom your friends attack, not only in the person of Bussy, but even in my own, — I intend to learn whether or not I am your brother, and whether there is a single man in France, your Majesty excepted, who has the right to look me in the face and refuse to lower his eyes, if not through respect, at least through fear."

At this moment, attracted by the squabble between the two brothers, Bussy appeared, gayly attired in his dress of pale-green satin with its knots of rose.

"Sire," said he, inclining before Henri, "deign to receive my most humble respects."

"*Pardieu!* he is here," said Henri.

"Your Majesty, apparently, has done me the honor of speaking about me?"

"Yes," answered the King, "and I am very glad to see you. Whatever they may say, your face is the very picture of health."

"Sire, a good blood-letting always brightens up the complexion," said Bussy, "and so mine must be very bright this evening."

"Well, as you have been beaten and injured, make your complaint, Seigneur de Bussy, and I will do you justice."

"Pardon me, sire, I have been neither beaten nor injured, and I make no complaint."

Henri seemed astounded, and looked at the Duc d'Anjou.

"Well! what were you saying a moment ago?" he asked.

"I was saying that Bussy was wounded by a dagger in the side."

"Is that true, Bussy?" asked the King.

"Since your Majesty's brother avouches for it, it must be true; the first prince of the blood could not lie."

"And although you have a wound in your side," said Henri, "you did not complain?"

"The only case in which I should complain, sire, would be, if I happened to lose my right hand, for that might prevent me from avenging myself; and yet," continued the incorrigible duellist, "I don't know but that I might still manage to avenge myself with the left."

"Insolent rascal!" murmured Henri.

"Sire," said the Duc d'Anjou, "you have spoken of justice; then do justice; we ask for nothing better. Order an inquiry, name the judges, and then it shall be known who prepared the ambush, who plotted murder."

Henri blushed.

"No," said he. "I prefer this time to be ignorant with which party the wrong lies and to grant a general pardon. I prefer compelling these fierce enemies to make peace, and I am sorry that Schomberg and D'Épernon are kept away by their wounds. Come, M. d'Anjou, which of my friends was the most violent on this occasion? It ought to be easy for you to answer, since you claim you saw them."

"Quélus, sire," answered the Duc d'Anjou.

"By my soul, yes, sire!" said Quélus; "I make no secret of it, and his Highness has seen things clearly."

"Then," said Henri, "let M. de Bussy and M. de Quélus make peace in the name of all the rest."

"Oh, sire!" exclaimed Quélus, "what does this mean?"

"It means that you are to embrace here in my presence, this very moment."

Quélus frowned.

"What, signor," said Bussy, turning round to Quélus, and imitating the gestures of an Italian pantaloon, "will you not do me this favor?"

The sally was so unexpected and made with such dash, that the King himself could not help laughing.

Then Bussy drew near to Quélus.

"You come-a now, monsou; the King-a wills it," said he, and threw both arms about his neck.

"I hope this does not bind us to anything," whispered Quélus to Bussy.

"Rest easy," replied Bussy, in the same tone. "We 'll meet, some day or other."

Quélus drew back in a fury, with flaming cheeks and disordered curls.

Henri frowned, and Bussy, still imitating a pantaloon, whirled round on his heels and passed out of the council chamber.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PETIT COUCHER OF HENRI III.

After this scene, beginning so tragically and ending so comically, the report of which was quickly noised abroad outside the Louvre, the King, still in a rage, took the way to his apartments, followed by Chicot, who asked for his supper.

"I 'm not hungry," said the King, as he stepped over the threshold.

"It 's possible," said Chicot; "but I 'm famished, and I should like a bite at something, if it were only a leg of mutton."

The King acted as if he had not heard. He unclasped his mantle, laid it on the bed, took off his cap, which was kept on his head by four long black pins, and flung it on a chair. Then, proceeding to the lobby that led to Saint-Luc's room, between which and his own there was but a simple wall:

"Wait for me here, Chicot," said he, "I shall return."

"Oh, there 's no hurry, my son," said the jester; "in fact," he added, listening to Henri's footsteps as they died away, "I am anxious to have time enough to get up a little surprise for your benefit."

Then, when there was complete silence: "Ho, there!" said he, opening the door of the ante-chamber.

A valet ran up.

"The King has changed his mind," said he; "he wants a nice supper prepared for himself and Saint-Luc. He gave special recommendations as to the wine. Begone, lackey."

The valet turned on his heels and hastened to execute Chicot's orders, not doubting they were those of the King.

As for Henri, he had passed, as we have said, into the chamber of Saint-Luc, who, having been notified of his Majesty's visit, had gone to bed, and was having prayers read for him by an old servant who, having followed him to the Louvre, was now a prisoner like himself. In a gilt arm-chair, in a corner, the page introduced by Bussy was sleeping profoundly, the head resting on the hands.

The King took in all this at a glance.

"Who is that young man?" he asked Saint-Luc, uneasily.

"Did not your Majesty, when you detained me here, authorize me to send for a page?"

"No doubt I did," answered the King.

"Well, I have taken advantage of your permission, sire."

"Ah, indeed!"

"Does your Majesty repent of granting me this indulgence?" asked Saint-Luc.

"Not at all, my son, not at all; on the contrary, amuse yourself. Well, how do you feel?"

"Sire," said Saint-Luc, "I am in a terrible fever."

"Of a truth, my child," said the King, "your face is very red. Let me feel your pulse; you know I am something of a doctor."

Saint-Luc held out his wrist, with visible ill-temper.

"Hum!" said the King, "intermittent, agitated!"

"Oh, sire," returned Saint-Luc, "I am really and truly very ill."

"Do not be alarmed," said Henri, "I'll send my own doctor to attend you."

"Thanks, sire, but I detest Miron."

"Then I'll take care of you myself."

"Sire, I could not allow it" —

"I will have a bed made up for you in my own room, Saint-Luc. We'll talk the whole night. I have a thousand things to relate to you."

"Ah!" cried Saint-Luc, driven to desperation, "you call yourself a doctor, you call yourself a friend, and you would hinder me from getting a wink of sleep. *Morbleu!* doctor, you have a queer way of treating your patients! *Morbleu!* sire, you have a singular fashion of showing your affection for your friends!"

"What! you would remain by yourself, and you in such a state of suffering?"

"Sire, I have my page, Jean."

"But he sleeps."

"I like the people who nurse me to be sleepy; at least they won't prevent me from sleeping myself."

"Let me watch by your bed. I will not speak to you unless you are awake."

"Sire, I am very ill-humored when I awake, and I should have to ask your pardon for all the foolish things I should be sure to say when only half-awake."

"Well, at least, come and wait upon me while I am preparing for bed."

"And I shall be free afterward to go to bed myself?"

"Perfectly free."

"Well, I agree. But I warn you you 'll find me but a poor courtier. I can't stand, I 'm so sleepy."

"You may yawn at your ease."

"What tyranny! — when you had all your other friends to call on!"

"Ah, yes, my other friends are in a nice condition. Bussy has led them a pretty dance, I can tell you: Schomberg has a wound in his thigh, D'Épernon has his wrist slashed, and Quélus is still dizzy with the blow he got yesterday and the embrace a while ago. Of course, D'O and Maugiron are left; but the one bores me to death and the other is always sulky."

"Would your Majesty be kind enough to leave me now?"

"Why are you so anxious to get rid of me?"

"I assure you, sire, I shall be with you in five minutes."

"In five minutes, agreed. But not more than five, you understand? And spend those five minutes in inventing a few diverting stories so that we may have a laugh together."

And then the King, who had half achieved his purpose, left the apartment, half satisfied.

As soon as the door closed behind him, the page started up and was at the bedside in a twinkling.

"Oh, Saint-Luc!" said she, when the sound of the King's footsteps could no longer be heard, "are you going to leave me again? Great heavens! this is actual torture! I amdying of fright. What if I were to be discovered!"

"My dear Jeanne," said Saint-Luc, "Gaspard, whom you see yonder," and he pointed to the old servant, "will protect you against annoying curiosity."

"Then I might just as well go away at once," said the young woman, blushing.

"If you insist on doing so, Jeanne," said Saint-Luc, sadly, "I 'll see that you are taken back safely to the Hôtel de Montmorency, for I alone am imprisoned here. But if you were as kind-hearted as you are beautiful, and had a little love for your poor Saint-Luc, you would wait for him a few moments. I shall pretend to be suffering so seriously from my head and nerves that the King will soon get tired of so melancholy a companion and let me leave him."

Jeanne lowered her eyes. "Go then," said she, "I will wait for you; but, like the King, I shall say to you: Do not be long."

"Jeanne, my darling Jeanne, you are adorable," exclaimed Saint-Luc. "Depend upon it, I shall be with you again at the earliest possible moment. Besides, an idea has occurred to me which may bear fruit; I will tell it to you when I return."

"And that idea will restore you to liberty?"

"I hope so."

"Then go; go at once."

"Gaspard," said Saint-Luc, "take good care that no one enters for the next quarter of an hour. At the end of that time, lock the door and bring me the key. I shall be in the King's apartment. Then go to the hôtel and tell them not to be uneasy at the absence of Madame la Comtesse; you need not return until to-morrow."

Gaspard promised, with a smile, to execute the orders, which the young woman heard with a blush.

Saint-Luc took his wife's hand, kissed it tenderly, then hurried to the room of the King, who was growing impatient.

Jeanne, alone, and trembling with terror, crouched behind the ample curtains of the bed, and there, at once anxious and wrathful, she, too, was planning how to escape successfully from her present strange situation, twirling an air-cane she had in her hand.

When Saint-Luc entered the King's room he inhaled the pungent, voluptuous perfume which filled the royal apartment. In fact, Henri's feet were planted on a heap of flowers, the stalks of which had been cut off, for fear they might irritate his Majesty's delicate skin: roses, jasmines, violets, gilly-flowers, in spite of the rigor of the season, formed a soft, odorous carpet for King Henri.

The chamber, whose ceiling had been lowered and decorated with fine paintings, was, as we have said, supplied with two beds, one of which was so wide that, although its head rested against the wall, it occupied nearly two-thirds of the room.

This bed was hung with gold and silken tapestry representing mythological characters, the subject being the story of Ceneus, or Cenis, at one time a man, at another a woman, which metamorphosis was not effected, it may well be imagined, without the most fantastic efforts on the part of the artist's imagination. The canopy was of cloth of silver, worked with gold and figures in silk, and the royal arms, richly embroidered, hung immediately above the head of the bed.

There were the same kind of hangings on the windows as on

the beds, and the sofas and chairs were covered with similar material. A silver-gilt lamp was suspended from the ceiling by a golden chain, and the oil in this lamp shed a delicious perfume as it burned. On the right of the bedstead, a satyr in gold held in his hand a candelabrum with four rose-colored tapers, also perfumed. These tapers, as long as church candles, were sufficient, with the lamp, to illuminate the apartment.

The King, with his feet resting on the flowers that covered the floor, was seated in an ebony chair inlaid with gold. He had seven or eight spaniel puppies in his lap; they were very young, and were licking his hands. Two servants were curling and dressing his hair, which was tucked up like a woman's, his hooked mustaches, and his thin, filmy beard. A third was daubing the prince's face with an unctuous layer of rose-colored cream that had a very pleasant smell.

Henri had his eyes closed, allowing himself to be operated on with all the majestic gravity of an Indian god.

"Saint-Luc!" said he, "where is Saint-Luc?"

Saint-Luc entered. Chicot took him by the hand and led him before the King.

"Now," said he, "here he is, your friend Saint-Luc. Order his face to be washed, or rather varnished, with your cream; if you don't take this indispensable precaution, something awful is sure to happen; he will smell bad to you, who smell so good, or you will smell too good to him, who does n't smell at all. By the way," added Chicot, stretching out his hands, "I think I 'll have a try at these greases and combs myself."

"Chicot! Chicot!" cried Henri, "your skin is too dry and would absorb too great a quantity of my cream; I have hardly enough for myself; and your hair is so rough it would break my combs."

"My skin has got dried up in fighting the battles of an ingrate prince, and, if my hair is rough, it is because it has got into the habit of bristling up at your continual indiscretions. Well, if you refuse me the cream for my cheeks, that is to say, for my exterior, all right, my son, that 's all I have to say."

Henri shrugged his shoulder, not at all inclined to be amused at the quips of his jester.

"Leave me, you are beginning to dote," said he.

Then, turning to Saint-Luc:

"Well, my son," he asked, "how is your head?"

Saint-Luc clapped his hand on his forehead and uttered a groan.

"Only fancy," continued Henri, "I have seen Bussy d'Amboise — A-a-h! monsieur," said he, turning to the hair-dresser, "you are burning me."

The hair-dresser fell on his knees.

"You saw Bussy d'Amboise, sire?" inquired Saint-Luc, shivering.

"Yes," answered the King; "just think of it! these idiots — five of them together — attacked him, and they failed. I will have them broken alive on the wheel. If you had been there, Saint-Luc! Eh?"

"Sire," returned Saint-Luc, "it is probable I should not have been luckier than my comrades."

"Don't talk nonsense. I would wager a thousand crowns of gold you'd touch Bussy ten times for every six he'd touch you. *Pardieu!* we must look to this to-morrow. Do you fence still, my child?"

"Why, of course, sire."

"I mean, do you practise often?"

"Almost every day when I am in good health; but when I am ill, sire, I am absolutely good for nothing."

"How often have you touched me?"

"We used to be pretty evenly matched, sire."

"Yes, but I fence better than Bussy. God's death, man," said Henri, turning to the barber, "you are tearing out my mustache!"

The barber fell on his knees.

"Sire," said Saint-Luc, "do you know any remedy for heart disease?"

"Eat plenty."

"Oh, sire, I believe you are mistaken."

"By no means, I assure you."

"You are right, Valois," said Chicot, "and as I have heart disease, or, maybe, stomach disease, — I am not quite sure which, — I have been following your prescription."

And a singular noise was heard, like the rapid crunching of a monkey's jaws.

The King turned round and beheld Chicot, who, after devouring the supper for two which he had ordered in the King's name, was noisily exercising his mandibles, while swallowing the contents of a cup of Japan porcelain.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Henri. "And pray what the devil are you doing there, Monsieur Chicot?"

"Taking my cream interiorly, since, exteriorly, you have forbidden it."

"Ha! traitor," said Henri, half jerking his head round in such untoward fashion that the pasty finger of his valet filled the King's mouth with cream.

"Eat, my son," said Chicot gravely. "I 'm not so tyrannical as thou art; thou 'rt permitted by me to use it interiorly or exteriorly."

"Monsieur, you are choking me," said Henri to the valet.

The valet fell on his knees, as the hair-dresser and barber had done before him.

"Some one send for the captain of the guards; some one go for him this instant!" cried Henri.

"And why for the captain of your guards?" inquired Chicot, passing his finger inside his cup and then inside his lips.

"To pass his sword through Chicot's body, and then, skinny as it is, to have it roasted for my dogs."

Chicot drew himself up to his full height:

"God's death!" cried he, "Chicot for your dogs! A man of gentle birth for your beasts! Well, then, let him come on, this captain of the guards of yours, and we 'll see!"

And Chicot drew his long sword, with which he cut and thrust so comically, now at the hair-dresser, now at the barber, now at the valet, that the King had to laugh.

"But I am hungry," he said at length, in a lachrymose voice, "and the rascal has eaten up the whole supper himself."

"Thou 'rt fantastical, Henri," said Chicot. "Did I not offer to share my supper and you refused? In any case, your soup is to the good; and, as I am no longer hungry, I 'm off to bed."

During this time, old Gaspard had brought the key to his master.

"And I, too," said Saint-Luc; "for if I remained longer up, I should be sure to fail in the respect I owe my sovereign, by having one of my nervous attacks in his presence. I am shivering as it is."

"A moment, Saint-Luc," said the King, giving him a handful of little puppies; "here, take them with you."

"Why?"

"To sleep with you. They will catch your disease, and you 'll be freed from it."

"Thanks, sire," said Saint-Luc, putting them back in the basket, "I have no confidence in your prescription."

"I will visit you to-night, Saint-Luc," said the King.

"Oh, do not come near me, I entreat you, sire," said Saint-Luc. "You would be sure to startle me out of my sleep, and that, as I have been told, brings on epilepsy."

And, after saluting the King, he passed out of the room.

Chicot had disappeared already.

Two or three others also left, and there remained with the King only the valets, who covered his face with a mask of fine cloth plastered with perfumed cream, in which were holes for the nose, eyes, and mouth. A cap of silk and silver fixed it on the forehead and over the ears.

Next they covered his arms with sleeves of rose-colored satin, well lined with wadded silk, and presented him with gloves made of a skin so supple that one might think them knitted. These gloves came up to the elbows, and were oiled inside with a perfumed unguent that gave them the elasticity so puzzling to those who saw only the exterior.

These mysteries of the toilet ended, he was presented with his soup in a golden cup; but, before bearing it to his lips, he poured half into another cup, in every respect like his own, and ordered it to be conveyed to Saint-Luc, with a message wishing him a good night's rest.

It was then God's turn, who, doubtless, on account of the King's great preoccupation, was treated rather jauntily. Henri said only a single prayer, and did not touch his beads at all, and, his bed having been warmed with coriander, benzoin, and cinnamon, he lay down.

Then, when he had arranged his head comfortably on the numerous pillows, Henri ordered the flowers, which were making the air too heavy, taken away. The windows were opened for a few seconds, to renew the carbon-laden atmosphere. Next, a big fire was suddenly lit in the marble chimney, and as quickly extinguished, but not until it had diffused a gentle warmth through the apartment.

After this the valet let down the curtains and hangings, and introduced the King's favorite dog, Narcisse, which jumped on the bed, turned round, and stretched itself crosswise at the feet of its master.

At last the rose-colored tapers burning in the hands of the golden satyr were blown out, the light of the night-lamp was lowered by the substitution of a smaller wick, and the valet, to whom were intrusted all these details, stole softly out of the room.

And now, more tranquil, more careless and oblivious than the idle monks of his kingdom buried in their fat abbeys, France's King no longer had to give himself the trouble of thinking that there was a France.

He slept.

Half an hour later, the people who watched in the galleries, and who, from their different stations, could distinguish the windows of Henri's chamber, saw through the curtains the royal lamp suddenly go out and the soft rose light which colored the windows replaced by the silvery rays of the moon, and they thought that now his Majesty must assuredly be asleep.

At this moment all sounds had died away, both within and without the palace, and one might have heard a bat fly in the sombre corridors of the Louvre.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE KING WAS CONVERTED IN THE NIGHT, AND NO ONE KNEW WHY.

Two hours passed thus.

Suddenly there resounded a terrible cry. This cry came from his Majesty's chamber.

Yet the night-lamp was still unlit, the silence was still profound, and no sound was heard except this strange call of the King.

For it was the King who had cried.

Soon was heard the noise of furniture falling, of porcelain breaking, footsteps hurrying wildly about the room; then renewed cries mingled with the barking of dogs. At once, lights gleamed, swords flashed in the galleries, and the heavy steps of the sleepy guards shook the massive pillars of the palace.

"To arms!" was shouted on all sides. "To arms! The King calls; let us run to the King."

And, that very instant, the captain of the guards, the colonel

of the Swiss, the servants of the Château, the arquebusiers on duty, dashed forward and rushed into the royal chamber, which was immediately inundated with a flood of light: twenty torches illuminated the scene.

Near an overturned chair and shattered cups, near the bed, whose coverings were scattered about the floor, stood Henri, at once grotesque and frightful in his night-robe, his hair on end, his eyes staring fixedly.

His right hand was extended, trembling like a leaf in the wind.

His left clutched the hilt of his sword, which he had grasped mechanically.

The dog, as excited as its master, was looking at him and howling.

The King seemed fairly dumb with terror, and all present, not daring to break the silence, questioning one another's eyes, waited in a condition of dreadful anxiety.

Then appeared, half-dressed, wrapped up in a large mantle, the young Queen, Louise de Lorraine, a fair, sweet being, who lived the life of a saint on earth, and who had been awakened by her husband's cries.

"Sire," said she, even more agitated than the others, "in God's name what is the matter? Your cries reached me and I have come."

"It — it — is nothing," stammered the King, without moving his eyes, which seemed to be glaring on some vague form in the air, invisible to all but him.

"But your Majesty cried," answered the Queen. "Is your Majesty, then, ill?"

The terror painted on Henri's features gradually affected all those present. They recoiled, advanced, devoured the King with their eyes, anxious to discover if he were wounded or had been struck by lightning or bitten by some reptile.

"Oh, sire, for Heaven's sake leave us not in this uncertainty!" cried the Queen. "Would you have a doctor?"

"A doctor!" said Henri, in the same sinister tone; "no, the body is not ill; 't is the soul — the mind. No, no; no doctor — a confessor."

Each one looked at his neighbor, questioned the doors, the curtains, the floor, the ceiling.

But nowhere was there a trace of the invisible object that had so frightened the King.

This inspection added fuel to the general curiosity. And the mystery was growing complicated; the King asked for a confessor!

The demand made, a messenger leaped at once on horseback, a thousand sparks flashed up from the pavement of the Louvre yard, and, five minutes later, Joseph Foulon, Superior of the Convent of St. Genevieve, was aroused and almost dragged from his bed.

When he reached the King the tumult ceased, silence was restored. There were conjectures, questions, guesses, but, above all, there was dismay. "The King is going to confess!"

Early the next morning, the King was up before everybody. He ordered the door of the Louvre closed; it had been opened only to let out the confessor.

Then he summoned his treasurer, his signet-bearer, his master of the ceremonies, took up his black-bound prayer-book, read a few prayers, paused to cut out some of the pictures of the saints, and, suddenly, ordered all his friends to be notified that he required their presence.

The first person visited, in pursuance of this order, was Saint-Luc; but he was sicker than ever. He was exhausted, utterly broken up. His indisposition had taken such a serious turn, his sleep, or rather lethargy, had been so heavy that he alone of all the dwellers in the palace had heard nothing during the night, although separated by but a thin partition from the prince. Consequently, he requested to be allowed to stay in bed, where he would say all the prayers ordered by the King.

At this doleful narrative, Henri made the sign of the cross and commanded his apothecary to be sent to Saint-Luc.

Then he desired all the scourges in the Convent of St. Genevieve to be brought to the Louvre, and, when they came, he went, all clad in black, to Schomberg, who limped; to D'Épernon, who had his arm in a sling; to Quélus, who was still dizzy; to D'O and Maugiron, who trembled, distributing the scourges on his way and bidding them flagellate one another as hard as their arms would let them.

D'Épernon observed that, as his right arm was in a sling, he ought to be excused from the ceremony; considering he could not return the strokes administered to him, there would be, so to speak, a note of discord in the flagellating scale.

Henri III. replied that his penitence would only be the more pleasing to God on that account.

He himself gave the example. After taking off his doublet, vest, and shirt, he wielded the scourge like a martyr. Chicot was beginning to laugh and jeer as usual, but a terrible look from the King taught him that now was not the time. Thereupon he seized a discipline like the others. Only, instead of striking himself, he pitched into his neighbors, and, when they were out of his reach, he lashed the paintings, columns, and woodwork, peeling off the varnish and doing other damage.

All this hubbub had the effect of restoring the King's calmness, externally, although any one could see his mind was still stirred to its very depths.

Suddenly he left his room, ordering those present to follow him. The scourging stopped behind him as if by enchantment. Chicot, alone, continued his flagellation of D'O, whom he detested. D'O, on the other hand, tried to give him as good as he got. It was a regular cat-o'-nine-tails' duel.

Henri passed into the apartments of the Queen. He presented her with a necklace of pearls worth twenty-five thousand crowns, kissed her on both cheeks, which had not happened for more than a year, and begged her to take off the royal ornaments and put on sackcloth.

Louise de Lorraine, always kind and gentle, consented at once. But she asked her husband why he gave her a pearl necklace and wanted her to wear sackcloth.

"For my sins," he answered.

The answer satisfied the Queen, for she knew better than any one the enormous sum-total of the sins for which her husband ought to do penance.

On the return of the King, the scourging is renewed. D'O and Chicot, who had not stopped, are bathed in blood. The King compliments them and tells them they are his true and only friends.

At the end of ten minutes, comes the Queen, clad in her sackcloth. Immediately, tapers are distributed to the court, and, with naked feet during that horrible weather of frost and snow, the fine courtiers and fine ladies, as well as the honest citizens of Paris, all devoted servants of the King and Our Lady, are on the road to Montmartre, at first shivering, but soon warming up under the furious strokes administered by Chicot to all who have the ill-luck to come within reach of his discipline.

D'O acknowledged he was conquered, and filed off fifty yards away from Chicot.

At four in the evening, the lugubrious procession was over. The convents had reaped a rich harvest, the feet of the courtiers were swollen and their backs raw; the Queen had appeared in public in an enormous chemise of coarse linen; the King, with a chaplet of beads, fashioned in the form of death's heads. There had been tears, cries, prayers, incense, and canticles.

The day, as we have seen, had been well spent.

The real fact, however, was every one had endured cold and blows in order to do the King a pleasure, but why the prince, who had been so eager in the dance the evening before, should mangle himself the day after, no one, for the life of him, could tell.

The Huguenots, Leaguers, and Libertines looked on, laughing, while the procession of the flagellants passed, saying, like the true misbelievers they were, that the last procession was far finer and more fervid, which was not true at all.

Henri returned, fasting, with long blue and red stripes on his shoulders. He did not leave the Queen the entire day, and, at every chapel where he halted, he took advantage of the opportunity to promise her that he would grant her new revenues and plan with her new pilgrimages.

As for Chicot, tired of striking, and tired of the unusual exercise to which the King had condemned him, he had stolen off, a little above the Porte Montmartre, and with Brother Gorenflot, one of his friends, he entered the garden of a hostelry in high renown, where he drank some high-spiced wine and eat a widgeon that had been killed in the Grange-Batelière marshes. Then, on the return of the procession, he resumed his rank and went back to the Louvre, running a-muck at the he-penitents and the she-ones, in the most delightful style imaginable, and distributing, as he said himself, his plenary indulgences.

At nightfall the King felt worn out by his fasting, his barefooted pilgrimage, and the furious blows to which he had treated himself. He had a vegetable soup served him, his shoulders bathed, a great fire lit, and then went to visit Saint-Luc, whom he found hale and hearty.

Since the evening before, the King was quite changed; all his thoughts were turned to the vanity of human things, penitence, and death.

"Ah!" said he, in the deep tones of a man disgusted with life, "God has, in good truth, done well to make our existence as bitter as possible."

"Why so, sire?" asked Saint-Luc.

"Because when man is tired of the world, instead of fearing death he longs for it."

"Pardon me, sire," returned Saint-Luc, "speak for yourself, but, in my case. I have not the slightest longing for death."

"Listen, Saint-Luc," said the King, shaking his head: "If you were wise, you would follow my advice, or, to speak more correctly, my example."

"And with great pleasure, sire, if your example pleased me."

"How should you like if I gave up my crown and you your wife, and entered a cloister to-morrow? I have a dispensation from our Holy Father the Pope. We shall make our profession to-morrow. I shall be called Brother Henri"—

"Forgive me, sire, forgive me. You may not think much of your crown, with which you are but too well acquainted, while I think a great deal of my wife, with whom my acquaintance is but slight. Therefore I refuse your offer."

"Why," said Henri, "you are getting better rapidly."

"Never better in my life, sire. My mind is tranquil, my soul joyful. I have a decided bent in the direction of happiness and pleasure."

"Poor Saint-Luc!" said the King, clasping his hands.

"You ought to have made your proposal yesterday, sire. Yesterday I was dull, whimsical, and in pain. This evening it is quite the other way: I spent a pleasant night, quite charming, in fact. And so, my present disposition is to be as gay as a lark. *Mordieu!* pleasure forever!"

"You are swearing, Saint-Luc," said the King.

"Did I swear, sire? 'T is not unlikely; but, then, if I do not mistake, you sometimes swear yourself."

"Yes, Saint-Luc, I have sworn; but I will never swear again."

"I should not venture to go as far as that. I will swear as little as possible. That 's the only thing I can promise. Besides, God is good and merciful when our sins spring from our human weaknesses."

"You think, then, God will pardon me?"

"Oh, I am not speaking of you, sire, I am speaking of your

humble servant. Plague on it! if you have sinned, you have sinned as a king, while I have sinned as a private individual. I hope, on the day of judgment, the Lord will not have the same weights and scales for us."

The King heaved a sigh and murmured a *confiteor*, beating his breast at the *mea culpa*.

"Saint-Luc," said he, at length, "will you spend the night in my room?"

"That 's as may be. What shall we do?" asked Saint-Luc, "in your Majesty's room?"

"We shall light it up. I will lie down, and you 'll read me the litanies of the saints."

"Thanks, sire."

"You don't like it, then?"

"Not the least in the world."

"So, you forsake me! Saint-Luc, you forsake me!"

"No, quite the contrary, I am not leaving you."

"Ah! you 're sure?"

"If you like."

"Certainly, I like."

"But on one condition, a condition *sine qua non*."

"What is it?"

"Your Majesty must have the tables set, send for violins and courtesans, and then, by my faith, we 'll dance."

"Saint-Luc! Saint-Luc!" cried the King, appalled.

"Nay!" said Saint-Luc, "I feel myself to-night in a merry humor. Will you drink and dance, sire?"

But Henri did not answer. His mind, generally so sportful and lively, was becoming gloomier and gloomier; it seemed wrestling with some secret thought that pressed it down, as might a leaden weight tied to the claws of a bird which vainly struggled to stretch its wings and fly.

"Saint-Luc," said the King, at length, in a mournful voice, "do you ever dream?"

"Often, sire."

"Do you believe in dreams?"

"Why, of course."

"But why?"

"Oh, because dreams sometimes compensate us for realities. Thus to-night I had a charming dream."

"What was it?"

"I dreamed that my wife" —

"Are you still thinking of your wife, then, Saint-Luc?"

"More than ever."

"Ah!" sighed the King, with an upward glance.

"I dreamed," continued Saint-Luc, "that my wife, with her lovely face, for she is lovely, sire" —

"Alas! yes," returned the King. "Eve was lovely also, O wretched man, and yet she ruined us all."

"Ah! so now I know the occasion of your ill-will. But to return to my dream, sire. Do you wish me?"

"I, too, dreamed" —

"My wife, then, with her lovely face, had taken to herself the wings and form of a bird, and, braving bolts and bars, had flown over the walls of the Louvre, knocked at my window, with a delicious little cry, which I understood plainly, and said, 'Open, Saint-Luc; let me in, my husband.'"

"And you opened?" said the King, almost in a tone of despair.

"I wager you I did," answered Saint-Luc, emphatically.

"Worldling!"

"Worldling, as much as you like, sire."

"And then you awoke?"

"No, sire, I took care not to; the dream was far too charming."

"And did you continue to dream?"

"As long as I could, sire."

"And you expect to-night" —

"To dream again, saving your Majesty's favor. Now you understand why I decline your kind request to go and read prayers to you. If I am compelled to keep awake I want, at least, to have something that will make up for my dream; and so, if, as I have already mentioned, your Majesty sends for the violins" —

"Enough, Saint-Luc, enough," said the King, rising, "you are damning yourself, and would damn me if I remained here any longer. Adieu, Saint-Luc; God grant that, instead of that diabolic dream, he sends you some saving vision which may induce you to-morrow to share my penitence and be saved along with me."

"I doubt it, sire, indeed. I am so decided on the matter that the best advice I can give your Majesty is to turn that libertine, Saint-Luc, out of the Louvre to-night, seeing that he has made up his mind to die impenitent."

"No," replied Henri, "no, I hope that on to-morrow grace will touch his heart as it has touched mine. Good evening, Saint-Luc; I will pray for you."

"Good evening, sire; I will dream for you."

And Saint-Luc began humming the first couplet of a song, more than indecorous, which the King was fond of singing when in good humor. Thereupon his Majesty beat a retreat, closing the door and murmuring as he entered his own room:

"My Lord and my God! thy wrath is just and lawful, for the world grows worse and worse!"

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW THE KING AND CHICOT WERE AFRAID OF BEING AFRAID.

After leaving Saint-Luc the King found the whole court assembled in the grand gallery, as he had ordered.

Then he distributed some favors among his friends, banished D'O, D'Épernon, and Schomberg to the provinces, threatened Maugiron and Quélus with trial if they had any more quarrels with Bussy, gave the latter his hand to kiss, and pressed his brother François to his heart.

As for the Queen, he was lavish in his expressions of love and praise in her regard, so that those present drew the most favorable auguries from his behavior as to the succession of the crown of France.

When the hour for retiring drew near it was easy to be seen that the King was putting off that hour as late as possible; at length the clock of the Louvre struck ten; Henri looked long and earnestly in every direction; apparently he was trying to make a choice among his friends of the person he should select for the office of reader, the office refused by Saint-Luc a few moments before.

Chicot noticed what the King was doing.

With his customary audacity he exclaimed:

"I say, Henri, you have been casting sheep's eyes at me all the evening. Would you be thinking, peradventure, of bestowing on me a fat abbey with an income of ten thousand livres? Zounds! what a prior I should make! Give it, my son, give it!"

"Come with me, Chicot," said the King. "Good evening, gentlemen, I am about to retire."

Chicot turned to the courtiers, twisted his mustache, and, with the most gracious air imaginable, rolling his big, soft eyes, repeated, parodying Henri:

"Good evening, gentlemen, we are about to retire."

The courtiers bit their lips; the King reddened.

"Ho there!" cried Chicot, "my hair-dresser, my valet, and, especially, my cream."

"No," said the King, "there is no need of all that this evening. We are near Lent, and I am doing penance."

"I regret the cream," said Chicot.

The King and his jester entered the apartment with which we are all so well acquainted.

"Oho, Henri," said Chicot; "so I am the favorite, the indispensable individual, then, am I? Why, I must be very pretty, prettier than that Cupid, Quélus, even."

"Silence, you fool; and you, gentlemen of the toilet, retire," said the King.

The valets obeyed, the door was shut, and Henri and Chicot were alone. Chicot looked at the King with amazement.

"Why are you sending them away?" asked the jester; "we have not yet been greased. Is it that you are thinking of greasing me with your own royal hand? Faith, it will be penance like the rest."

Henri did not answer. Everybody had left the chamber, and the two kings, the fool and the sage, looked at each other.

"Let us pray," said Henri.

"Excuse me," returned Chicot; "no fun in praying. If it was for that you brought me here, I prefer returning to the bad company I left. Adieu, my son, good evening."

"Stay," said the King.

"Oh, oh!" retorted Chicot, drawing himself up; "this is regular tyranny. Thou 'rt a despot, a Phalaris, a Dionysius, You really make me tired. You force me to spend a whole day in mangling the shoulders of my friends, and, seemingly, you are now in the humor to begin again to-night. Plague take it, Henri, don't let us begin it again! There are only two of us here; and, when there are only two, every stroke tells!"

"Hush, you wretched babbler, and think of repentance," said the King.

"Ha! now I see what you mean; I repent. And of what, pray? Of being the buffoon of a monk? *Confiteor* — I repent. *Mea culpa* — through my fault, through my fault, through my very great fault!"

"No sacrilege, wretch!" cried the King; "no sacrilege, I say!"

"Oh, indeed!" retorted Chicot. "I 'd rather be shut up in a den of lions or a cage of monkeys than to be in the room of a mad king. Farewell! I 'm off."

The King took the key out of the lock.

"Henri," said Chicot, "I warn thee that thy aspect is sinister; and, if I am hindered from leaving, I will cry out, call for help, break the door, smash the windows — help! help!"

"Chicot, my friend," said the King, in his most melancholy tone, "you are taking advantage of my sad condition."

"Ah, I understand," returned Chicot, "you are afraid of being alone; all tyrants are like that. Well, why can't you have a dozen chambers built, like Dionysius, or a dozen palaces, like Tiberius. Meantime, you take my long sword, and I 'll carry the scabbard with me to my room."

At the word "afraid," Henri's eyes had glared; then, with a strange shiver, he had risen and crossed the chamber. He was so tremulous, his face was so pallid, that Chicot began to think him really ill, and, after the King had walked three or four times up and down the floor, he said, apprehensively:

"Come, come, my son, what ails you? Tell your troubles to your own Chicot."

The King halted before the jester, and gazing at him, said:

"Yes, you are my friend, my only friend."

"Then," returned Chicot, "there is the Abbey of Valencey, which is vacant."

"Listen, Chicot," said Henri; "are you discreet?"

"Also that of Pithiviers, where you can eat delicious lark pies."

"In spite of your buffooneries, you are a courageous man," continued the King.

"Then don't give me an abbey, give me a regiment."

"Ay, and even a prudent man."

"Then don't give me a regiment, make me a member of your privy council. But no; I fancy I should prefer a regiment or an abbey; I won't be a councillor — I should always have to be of the King's opinion."

"Hush, Chicot, hush! the hour, the terrible hour is drawing nigh."

"Oh, are you going over all that again?" said Chicot.

"You are going to see, to hear."

"See what? hear whom?"

"Wait. The issue will teach you things you may wish to know. Wait."

"No, no, I have n't the slightest intention of waiting; why, what mad dog, I wonder, bit your father and mother on the fatal night you were begotten!"

"Chicot, are you brave?"

"I should rather say so! But, *tudiable*, I don't put my bravery to the touch in this fashion. When the King of France and Poland shrieks out in the night so as to create a scandal in the Louvre, the presence of an insignificant person like myself in your apartment would dishonor it. Good-by, Henri, summon your captains, your Swiss, your doorkeepers, and let me scamper off. A plague on your invisible dangers! I have no notion of bumping up against a peril I know nothing of!"

"I command you to remain," said the King, authoritatively.

"Well, upon my soul! — a nice master you are to want to command a fellow that 's in a regular panic. I 'm afraid — do you hear? I 'm afraid, I tell you. Help, help! Fire!"

And Chicot, as if to get away as far as possible from danger, jumped on the table.

"Well, you scamp," said the King, "I see I shall have to tell you everything, since that is the only way to keep your mouth shut."

"Aha!" cried Chicot, rubbing his hands, getting off the table cautiously, and drawing his enormous sword; "once I am warned, I don't care; we 'll fight the matter out between us. Go on, go on, my son. Would it be a crocodile that 's after you, eh? Don't be alarmed; look at that blade — sharp as a razor; I pare my corns with it once a week, and they 're tough ones, I can tell you. You said it was a crocodile, Henri, did n't you?"

And Chicot sank back in a big chair and placed the sword between his thighs, crossing his legs over it, so that it looked not unlike the caduceus of Mercury, entwined by those symbols of peace, the serpents.

"Last night," said Henri, "I was asleep" —

"And I also," interrupted Chicot.

"Suddenly a breath swept over my face."

"It was that cur of yours that was hungry," said Chicot, "and was licking the grease off your face."

"I half awoke and felt my beard bristle with terror under my mask."

"Ah! you make me shiver deliciously," said Chicot, coiling himself in his armchair and resting his chin on the pommel of his sword.

"Then," continued the King, in tones so weak and trembling that they hardly reached Chicot's ear, — "then a voice resounded in the room with a vibration so doleful that my mind was entirely unsettled."

"The voice of the crocodile. I understand. I remember reading in Marco Polo that the crocodile has a terrible voice resembling the cry of a child; but do not be uneasy, my son; if he come, we 'll kill him."

"Are you listening attentively?"

"*Pardieu!* am I listening?" said Chicot, starting up as if he were on wires. "I am all ears, as still as a post and as dumb as an oyster. Go on."

Henri went on, in tones gloomier and more lugubrious than ever.

"'Miserable sinner,' said the voice" —

"Bah!" interrupted Chicot; "so the voice spoke? It was not a crocodile, then?"

"'Miserable sinner' said the voice, 'I am the voice of the Lord thy God!'"

Chicot took a leap and was again plump down in his armchair.

"The voice of God?" he asked.

"Ah! Chicot," replied Henri, "it was an awful voice."

"It was n't a sweet-toned voice, then? something like the sound of a trumpet, as we are told in Scripture?" inquired Chicot.

"'Art thou there? Dost hear?' continued the voice. 'Dost thou hear, O hardened sinner? Art thou indeed resolved to persevere in thy iniquity?'"

"Ah, really now!" said Chicot. "Why, upon my word, the voice of God is a little like the voice of your people, after all."

"Next," resumed the King, "followed many other reproaches, which, I assure you, Chicot, hurt me very much."

"Still, let us have a little more, my son," said Chicot; "continue, tell me what the voice said; I want to know if God is a well-informed person."

"Pagan!" cried the King, "if you doubt, I will have you punished."

"I doubt?" said Chicot; "oh, not at all. The only thing that puzzles me is that God should have waited till now to reproach you in the style you mention. He has become very patient since the Deluge. Well, my son, you had an awful fright?"

"Awful!" answered Henri.

"There was some reason for it."

"The perspiration rolled down my temples and the marrow seemed to dry up in my bones."

"As in Jeremiah; quite natural; upon my word as a gentleman, I don't know what I should have done in your place; and then you called?"

"Yes."

"And they came?"

"Yes."

"And a thorough search was made?"

"Everywhere."

"And God was not discovered?"

"Nothing was seen."

"It 's frightful."

"So frightful that I sent for my confessor."

"Ah, good! he came?"

"On the instant."

"Come now, my son, do violence to yourself and try to be frank with me. What does your confessor think of this revelation?"

"He shuddered."

"I should think he would."

"He crossed himself, and ordered me to repent as God had warned me to do."

"Very good indeed! there 's never any harm in repenting. But what did he say of the vision itself, or, rather, of what you heard, for you don't seem to have seen anything?"

"He said it was providential, a miracle; that now I must think of nothing but the good of the state. And so, this morning, I have given" —

"This morning you have given, my son?"

"A hundred thousand livres to the Jesuits."

"Admirable!"

"And mangled my own flesh and that of my young lords with scourges."

"Perfect. And then?"

"And then. Give me your opinion, Chicot. I am not now talking to the jester, but to a sensible man who is my friend."

"Well, sire," replied Chicot, seriously, "I believe your Majesty has had a nightmare."

"You believe, then, that" —

"Your Majesty has had a dream, which will not recur unless you let your mind dwell too much upon it."

"A dream?" said Henri, shaking his head. "No, no, I was wide awake, that you may be sure of, Chicot."

"You were asleep, Henri."

"I slept so little that my eyes were wide open, I tell you."

"I sleep in that way myself."

"Yes, but I saw with my eyes, and that does not really happen when we are asleep."

"And what did you see?"

"I saw the moon shining through the windows of my chamber, and there, where you are standing, Chicot, I beheld the amethyst in the hilt of my sword glowing with a sombre light."

"And what had become of the light in your lamp?"

"It was extinguished."

"A dream, my poor son, a pure dream."

"Why do you not believe me, Chicot? Is it not said that the Lord speaks to kings when he wishes to work some great change on the earth?"

"Yes, it is true enough he speaks to them, but in so low a tone that they never hear him."

"What makes you so incredulous?"

"Because you heard so very distinctly."

"Well, then, have you any idea why I bade you remain?" said the King.

"*Parbleu!* I have my own ideas."

"It was that you might hear for yourself what the voice may say."

"So that, if I repeat what I heard, it will be believed I am uttering some buffoonery or other. Chicot is such a paltry, insignificant, mad creature that, no matter what he says, no one will believe him. Not badly played, my son."

"Why not rather think, my friend," said the King, "that

I am confiding this secret to you because of your well-known fidelity ?"

"Ah, do not lie, Henri, for, if the voice come, it will reproach you for your mendacity, and God knows you have enough of sins to your credit already. But no matter, I accept the commission. I shall not be sorry to hear the voice of the Lord; perhaps he may have something to say to me also."

"What ought I to do, then ?"

"Go to bed, my son."

"But if" —

"No 'buts.'"

"Still" —

"Do you think you're likely to hinder the voice of God from speaking because you happen to be standing? A king is taller than other men only by the height of his crown; believe me, Henri, when he is bareheaded he is the same height as other men, and sometimes an inch or two lower."

"Very well," said the King, "you stay."

"I have agreed to that already."

"Then I'll lie down."

"Good !"

"But you won't go to bed ?"

"Have n't the least intention."

"I 'll take off nothing but my doublet."

"Do as you like."

"I'll keep my breeches on."

"Wisely determined."

"And you ?"

"I stay where I am."

"And you will not sleep ?"

"That I can't promise. Sleep, like fear, my son, is independent of the will."

"You will, at least, do what you can ?"

"Rest easy. I'll pinch myself; besides, the voice will rouse me up."

"Do not joke about the voice," said Henri, who drew back the leg he had already in bed.

"Oh, don't bother me," said Chicot, "or do you want me to put you to bed ?"

The King sighed, and after anxiously scrutinizing every corner of the apartment, slipped, shivering, into bed.

"Now," thought Chicot, "it's my turn."

And he stretched his limbs out in an armchair, arranging the cushions and pillows behind and beside him.

"How do you feel, sire?"

"Pretty fairly," said the King; "and you?"

"Quite comfortable. Good-night, Henri."

"Good-night, Chicot, but don't sleep."

"I'll take good heed not to," said Chicot, yawning as if he were tired to death.

And both closed their eyes, the King pretending to sleep and Chicot asleep really.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE VOICE OF THE LORD BLUNDERED AND TOOK CHICOT FOR THE KING.

The King and Chicot were almost quiet and silent for about ten minutes. Suddenly the King started and sat up in bed.

Chicot, who was plunged in the sweet drowsiness that precedes sleep, was aroused by the noise and the movement, and did the same.

Both gazed wildly at each other.

"What is it?" asked Chicot, in a low voice.

"The breath," said the King, in tones still lower, "the breath on my face."

At the same instant one of the candles, held by the golden satyr, was extinguished, then a second, then a third, then the last.

"Oh! Oh!" said Chicot, "what a breath!"

Chicot had hardly uttered these words when the lamp was extinguished also, and the apartment was lit only by the last gleams of the fire in the chimney.

"Danger ahead!" cried Chicot, on his feet in an instant.

"He is going to speak," said the King, cowering in bed; "he is going to speak."

"Then," said Chicot, "listen."

That very moment was heard a hollow, hissing voice, apparently speaking from the side of the bed.

"Hardened sinner, art thou there?" it said.

"Yes, yes, Lord," stammered Henri through his chattering teeth.

"Oh! Oh!" said Chicot, "that is a very hoarse voice to come all the way from heaven. Still, this is awful, all the same."

"Dost thou hear me?" said the voice.

"Yes, Lord," mumbled Henri, "and I listen, prostrate before thy wrath."

"Didst thou think, then," continued the voice, "thou wert obeying me when taking part in all those external mummeries thou wert engaged in to-day, thy heart remaining untouched the while?"

"Well said!" exclaimed Chicot. "That hit told."

The King hurt his hands, so tightly did he clasp them. Chicot drew near him.

"Well," murmured Henri, "what do you say now? Do you believe now, infidel?"

"Wait," said Chicot.

"What for?"

"Hush, and listen! Get out of your bed as softly as possible, and let me take your place."

"Why?"

"That the Lord's anger may fall upon me in your stead."

"Do you think he will spare me in that way?"

"We can, at all events, try."

And with affectionate persistence he pushed the King out of the bed and lay down in his place.

"Now, Henri," said he, "go and sit down in my chair and leave the rest to me."

Henri obeyed; he was beginning to understand.

"Thou dost not answer," resumed the voice; "a proof that thou art hardened in sin."

"Oh, pardon! pardon, Lord," said Chicot, in the nasal tones of the King.

Then, leaning over toward Henri: "It is funny, my son," he whispered, "that the good God does not recognize Chicot."

"Humph! it does look queer," answered Henri.

"Wait, you 're going to see queerer things still."

"Miscreant!" said the voice.

"Yes, Lord," answered Chicot; "yes, I am a hardened sinner, a frightful sinner."

"Then confess thy crimes, and repent."

"I confess," said Chicot, "that I have been a great traitor to my cousin, Condé, whose wife I seduced, and I repent of it."

"What 's that you 're saying?" murmured the King. "Pray hold your tongue. That has occurred so long ago that we need not trouble about it."

"Ah, yes, quite right; let us pass to something else," said Chicot.

"Speak," said the voice.

"I confess," continued the false Henri, "that I have been an abominable thief in respect of the Poles, who had elected me their king, running away from them one fine night, and carrying off the crown jewels along with me, and I repent."

"Ha, you caitiff! Why do you recall that?" said Henri. "It was quite forgotten."

"You see, I must continue to deceive him," answered Chicot. "Pray let me alone."

"Speak," said the voice.

"I confess I stole the throne of France from my brother, Alençon, to whom it belonged by right, since I had formally renounced it on becoming King of Poland, and I repent."

"Knave!" said the King.

"I confess that I made an arrangement with my good mother, Catharine de Medicis, to banish out of France my brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, having first destroyed all his friends, and to banish also my sister, Queen Marguerite, after destroying all her lovers, all of which I regret most sincerely."

"Ah! you miscreant!" murmured the King, grinding his teeth in rage.

"Sire, we must not offend God by trying to hide from him what he knows as well as we do."

"I do not want to discuss your political life," the voice went on.

"Ah, you have come to it, then!" continued Chicot, in a most doleful voice; "it 's my private life you 're after, is it?"

"Undoubtedly," said the voice.

"It is quite true, O my God!" resumed Chicot, still speaking in the name of the King, "that I am lustful, slothful, effeminate, frivolous, and hypocritical."

"All that is true," said the voice, in a hollow tone.

"I have ill-treated women, and especially my wife, the most virtuous of her sex."

"A man ought to love his wife like himself, and prefer her to everything else in the world," said the voice, furiously.

"Ah!" cried Chicot, despairingly, "in that case my sins are indeed great."

"And you have caused others to sin by your example."

"True, true, nothing could be truer."

"You have been very near damning that poor Saint-Luc."

"Ah, then, you're quite sure I have not damned him already?"

"Yes, but that is sure to happen to him and to you, too, if you do not send him back to his family to-morrow morning, at the latest."

"Aha!" said Chicot to the King, "the voice appears to be very friendly to the house of Cossé."

"And if you do not also," continued the voice, "make him a duke and his wife a duchess, as some compensation for her enforced widowhood during the last couple of days."

"And if I do not obey!" asked Chicot, betraying in his voice an inclination to resist.

"If you obey not," resumed the voice, swelling in a terrible fashion, "you will roast for a whole eternity in the same caldron in which Sardanapalus, Nebuchadnezzar, and the Maréchal de Rez are waiting for your company."

Henri III. uttered a groan. The terror that retook possession of him at this threat became more poignant than ever.

"Plague on it, Henri!" said Chicot, "don't you notice the extraordinary interest Heaven appears to be taking in Saint-Luc? The devil fly away with me but you might think he had the good God up one of his sleeves!"

But Henri was not listening to the waggeries of Chicot, or, if he were, they failed to reassure him.

"I am lost," said he, frantically. "I am lost! and this voice from the other world is a forerunner of my death."

"Voice from the other world!" cried Chicot; "ah, this time you are mistaken, for a dead certainty. Voice from the other side, at the most."

"What! a voice from the other side?" asked Henri.

"Why, of course! Don't you understand that the voice comes from the other side of yon wall? Henri, the good God is your guest in the Louvre. Probably, like the Emperor Charles V., he is passing through France on his road to hell."

"Atheist! Blasphemer!"

"He does you great honor, Henri; and so accept my congratulations; still, I'm afraid you're giving him a rather cold reception. What! the good God is lodged in your Louvre, only separated from you by a partition, and yet you will not honor him with a visit! Oh, fie, fie! Valois, thou art not thyself. I do not recognize thee; thou'rt not polite."

At this moment a log flamed up in the chimney, and the sudden glare illuminated Chicot's face. There was such an expression of merriment and mockery on it that the King was amazed.

"What!" said he, "you have the heart to gibe? you dare to" —

"Yes, my son, I do dare," said Chicot, "and you will be as daring as I am in a minute, or else may I be hanged. Collect your wits, then, and do as I tell you."

"You mean go and see" —

"If the good God is really in the chamber next you."

"But if the voice continues speaking?"

"Am I not here to answer it? Besides, it's just as well for me to go on speaking in your name. That will make the voice believe you are here still, for a splendidly credulous voice is this divine voice of ours, and does not know its trade as well at all as it might. Why, for the last quarter of an hour that I have been braying, it has never once recognized me! Really, this is humiliating for the human intellect."

Henri frowned. Chicot had said so much that even his outrageous credulity had received a shock.

"I think you are right, Chicot," said he, "and I should really like" —

"Then go," said Chicot, pushing him.

Henri softly opened the door of the corridor that led to the next apartment, which was, the reader will remember, the room of Charles IX.'s nurse, and now the temporary abode of Saint-Luc. But he had no sooner taken four steps in the lobby than he heard a renewal of the voice's reproaches, now bitterer than ever, and Chicot's broken-hearted responses.

"Yes," said the voice, "you are as fickle as a woman, as effeminate as a sybarite, and as corrupt as a pagan."

"Ah!" whined Chicot, sobbing, "is it my fault, great Lord, if you have made my skin so soft, my hands so white, my nose so delicate, and my mind so fickle? But that is all past, my God! From to-day I will wear nothing but shirts made of the

coarsest cloth. I will sit on a dung-heap, like Job, and eat offal, like Ezekiel."

However, Henri continued to advance along the corridor, noticing with wonder that as the voice of Chicot died away, the other voice increased in volume, and apparently came from Saint-Luc's apartment.

Henri was about to knock at the door, when he perceived a ray of light which filtered through the wide keyhole of the chiselled lock.

He stooped down and looked.

Suddenly Henri, who was very pale, grew red with anger. He started up and rubbed his eyes as if to see better what he could scarcely believe he saw at all.

"God's death!" he murmured, "is it possible any one has dared to play on me such a trick as that?"

For what he had seen through the keyhole was this:

In a corner of the chamber, Saint-Luc in silk drawers and dressing-gown was blowing into an air-cane the threatening words the King had taken for words divine, and near him, leaning on his shoulder, was a young woman in a white diaphanous dress, who, from time to time, snatched the cane from his hands and blew therein, roughening the tones of her voice, all the fancies which might have been first read in her arch eyes and on her smiling lips. Then there were wild outbursts of merriment every time the air-cane was put to use, followed by the doleful lamentations of Chicot, whose imitation of the King was so perfect, whose nasal tones were so natural, that they nearly deceived the King himself; hearing them from the corridor, he almost thought it was he himself who was weeping and whining.

"Jeanne de Cossé in Saint-Luc's room, a hole in the wall, all to mystify me!" growled the King, in a hollow voice. "Ah, the wretches! they shall pay dearly for this!"

And, at a phrase more insulting than the others, breathed by Madame de Saint-Luc into the air-cane, Henri drew back a step and with a kick that was rather vigorous for such an effeminate being, burst in the door, half unfastening the hinges and breaking the lock.

Jeanne, half-naked, uttered a fearful cry and ran to hide behind the curtains, which she wrapped about her.

Saint-Luc, the air-cane still in his hand, fell on his knees, pale with terror, before the King, who was pale with fury.

"Ah!" cried Chicot from the royal chamber, "mercy! I

invoke the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, of all the saints — I grow weak. I am dying."

But in the next apartment, none of the actors in the burlesque scene we have just narrated felt any inclination to speak or move, so rapidly had the situation turned from farce to tragedy.

Henri broke the silence with a word, the stillness with a gesture.

"Begone!" said he, pointing to the door.

And, yielding to a frantic impulse unworthy of a king, he wrested the air-cane from Saint-Luc's hand and raised it as if to strike him. But it was then Saint-Luc's turn to start to his feet, as if moved by a spring of steel.

"Sire," said he, "you have only the right to strike off my head. I am a gentleman."

Henri dashed the air-cane violently on the floor. Some one picked it up. It was Chicot, who, hearing the crash made by the breaking of the door and judging that the presence of a mediator would not be out of place, had dashed out of the room that very instant.

He left Henri and Saint-Luc to clear up matters in whatever way they chose, and, running straight to the curtain, behind which he guessed some one was concealed, he drew forth the poor woman, who was all in a tremble.

"Aha! aha!" exclaimed he, "Adam and Eve after the fall. You chase them out of the garden, Henri, don't you?" he asked, fixing a questioning glance on the King.

"Yes," said Henri.

"Wait, then, I 'm going to act as the expelling angel."

And, flinging himself between the King and Saint-Luc, he extended the air-cane above the heads of the guilty couple, as if it were the flaming sword, saying:

"This is my paradise, which you have lost by your disobedience. I forbid you ever to enter it again."

Then whispering in the ear of Saint-Luc, who had thrown his arms about his wife to protect her against the King's anger, if necessary:

"If you have a good horse," said he, "be twenty leagues away from here to-morrow, though you have to kill him."

CHAPTER X.

HOW BUSSY WENT AFTER HIS DREAM AND FOUND IT A REALITY.

Meanwhile, Bussy had returned with the Duc D'Anjou, both in pensive mood: the prince, because he dreaded the consequences of his vigorous attack on the King, to which he had, in some sort, been driven by Bussy; Bussy, because the events of the preceding night absorbed him to the exclusion of everything else.

"On the whole," said he to himself when, after paying many compliments to the Duc d'Anjou on the energy he had displayed, he started for his hôtel, "on the whole, there is one thing of which I cannot have any doubt: it is that I have been attacked, have fought, was wounded, for I feel the wound in my right side, and a very painful one it is. Now, when I was fighting, I saw, as plainly as I now see the cross of Les Petits-Champs, the wall of the Hôtel des Tournelles and the battlements of the Bastile. It was in the Place de la Bastille, nearly opposite the Hôtel des Tournelles, between the Rue Sainte-Catherine and the Rue Saint-Paul, that I was attacked, for I was going along the Faubourg Saint-Antoine for Queen Marguerite's letter. It was there, then, that I was attacked, near a door having a barbican, through which, when the door was shut on me, I saw the pale cheeks and flaming eyes of Quélus. I was in an alley; at the end of the alley was a staircase. I tripped over the first step of this staircase. Then I fainted; then began my dream; and then I awoke on the slope of one of the ditches of the Temple, surrounded by a butcher, a monk, and an old woman.

"Now, how comes it that my other dreams have dropped so quickly and completely from my memory, while this one has only been the more firmly fixed on it by the lapse of time? Ah!" exclaimed Bussy, "that is where the mystery comes in."

And he halted, at this very moment, in front of the door of his hôtel, which he had just reached, and, leaning against the wall, he closed his eyes.

"*Morbleu!*" said he, "no dream could leave on the mind such an impression as that. I see the chamber with its figured tapestry; I see the painted ceiling; I see my carved wooden

bed with its damask and gold curtains; I see the portrait, and I see the blonde woman; and finally, I see the merry, kindly face of the young doctor who was brought to my bed with his eyes bandaged; surely, proofs sufficiently conclusive. Let me go over them again: a tapestry, a ceiling, a carved bed, curtains of white damask and gold, a woman, and a doctor. Forward, Bussy! you must set to work to discover all this, and, except you are the stupidest brute in creation, you will find it.

"And, in the first place," continued Bussy, "in order to enter upon my task in a promising manner, I ought to adopt the costume most befitting a night-prowler; then — Hey for the Bastile!"

In virtue of this resolution, not at all a reasonable one in the case of a man who, having narrowly missed being slaughtered at a certain spot in the evening, yet would go on the next day, at very nearly the same hour, and explore the selfsame spot, Bussy went upstairs, had a valet, who was somewhat of a surgeon, attend to his wound, put on long boots which came up to the middle of his thighs, took his stoutest sword, wrapped his cloak about him, got into his litter, stopped at the end of the Rue du Roi-de-Sicile, got out, ordered his people to wait for him, and, after reaching the Rue Saint-Antoine, made his way to the Place de la Bastille.

It was nine in the evening, or thereabouts; the curfew had rung; Paris was becoming a desert. Thanks to a thaw, which a little sunlight and a somewhat warmer atmosphere had brought about during the day, the frozen swamps and mudholes in the Place de la Bastille had given way to a number of little lakes and precipices through which the much-trodden road, of which we have already spoken, threaded its way.

Bussy made every exertion to find the spot where his horse had fallen, and came to the conclusion that he knew it; he advanced, retreated, made the same movements he remembered having made at the time; he stepped back to the wall; then examined the doors to discover the corner against which he had leaned and the wicket through which he had looked at Quélus. But all the doors had corners, and almost all had wickets, and every one had an alley. By a fatality which will seem less extraordinary if it be considered that, at that period, such a person as a concierge was unknown in citizens' houses, three-fourths of the doors had alleys.

"*Pardieu!*" thought Bussy, in anything but an easy frame of mind, "though I have to knock at every door of them, question every one of the lodgers, spend a thousand crowns in getting old women and servants to talk, I 'll find out what I want to find out. There are fifty houses: taking ten houses a night, it will be a job of five nights; all right, but I think I 'll wait for drier weather."

When Bussy had finished his monologue, he perceived a small, pale, tremulous light approaching; it glistened on the puddles of water as it advanced, just as might have glistened the light of a beacon on the sea. Its progress in his direction was slow and unequal, now halting, now making a bend to the left, now to the right, sometimes suddenly stumbling, then dancing like a will-'o-the-wisp, again marching on steadily, and again indulging in fresh capers.

"Decidedly," said Bussy, "one of the queerest spots in the city is the Place de la Bastille; but no matter, I 'll wait and see."

And Bussy, to wait and see more at his ease, wrapped himself in his cloak and entered a doorway. The night was as dark as could be, and it was impossible to distinguish anything at the distance of a few feet.

The lantern continued to advance, making the wildest zigzags. But as Bussy was not superstitious, he was convinced the light he saw was not one of those wandering Jack-o'-lanterns that were such a terror to mediæval travellers, but purely and simply a cresset suspended from a hand, said hand being itself connected with some body or other.

And, in fact, after the lapse of a few minutes, this conjecture was found to be perfectly correct. About thirty paces or so from him, Bussy perceived a dark form, long and slender as a whipping-post, which form gradually assumed the shape of a human being with a lantern in his left hand; the hand was now stretched out in front, now sideways, now fell quietly along the hip. For a time it looked as if this individual belonged to the honorable confraternity of drunkards, for to drunkenness only could be attributed the strange gyrations in which he turned and the sort of philosophic serenity wherewith he stumbled into mud-holes and floundered through puddles.

Once he happened to slip on a sheet of half-thawed ice, and the hollow echo, brought to Bussy's ears, as well as the

involuntary movement of the lantern, which apparently had taken a sudden leap over a precipice, proved that the nocturnal promenader, with but little confidence in the steadiness of his legs, had sought a more assured centre of gravity.

From that moment Bussy began to feel the respect with which all noble hearts are imbued for belated drunkards, and was advancing to the aid of this "curate of Bacchus," as Master Ronsard would call him, when he saw the lantern rise again with a quickness that indicated its bearer was more solid on his feet than his first appearance evidenced.

"I 'm in for another adventure, as far as I can see," murmured Bussy; "better stay quiet awhile."

And as the lantern resumed its progress in his direction, he drew farther back than before into the doorway.

The lantern advanced about ten paces, and then Bussy took note of a circumstance that appeared rather strange: the man who carried the lantern had a bandage over his eyes.

"*Pardieu!*" said he, "a queer fancy that! playing blind-man's-buff with a lantern, particularly in such weather and on such ground as this! Am I, perchance, beginning to dream again?"

Bussy still waited, and the man with the lantern advanced five or six steps more.

"God forgive me," said Bussy, "if I don't believe he 's talking to himself. I have it! he 's neither a drunkard nor a lunatic: he 's simply a mathematician solving a problem."

The last words were suggested to our observer by the last words of the man with the lantern, and which Bussy had heard.

"Four hundred and eighty-eight, four hundred and eighty-nine, four hundred and ninety," murmured the man with the lantern; "it must be close to here."

And thereupon this mysterious personage raised the bandage, and, when he came in front of the house, approached the door, scrutinizing it carefully.

"No," said he, "that is n't it."

Then he lowered his bandage and went on, calculating and walking as before.

"Four hundred and ninety-one, four hundred and ninety-two, four hundred and ninety-three, four hundred and ninety-four — I ought to be right plump on it now," said he.

And he lifted the bandage a second time, and, drawing nigh

the door next to the one where Bussy was hidden, he examined it with no less attention than he had done the first.

"Hem! hem," said he, "that might really be it. Why, it is! no, it is n't. Confound those doors, they 're all alike."

"The very reflection I had made myself!" thought Bussy, "which leads me to believe my mathematician is a decidedly clever fellow."

The mathematician put on the bandage again, and resumed his peregrinations.

"Four hundred and ninety-five, four hundred and ninety-six, four hundred and ninety-seven, four hundred and ninety-eight, four hundred and ninety-nine. If there 's a door in front of me," said the searcher, "this must be it."

In fact, there was a door, and it was the very one in which Bussy was concealed; the consequence was that when the supposed mathematician raised his bandage he found that he and Bussy were face to face.

"How now?" said Bussy.

"Oh!" returned the promenader, recoiling a step.

"Hullo!" cried Bussy.

"But it is n't possible!" exclaimed the unknown.

"Yes, it is, only it is extraordinary. Why, you are the very same doctor!"

"And you are the very same gentleman!"

"Not a doubt of it."

"Jesus! What an odd meeting!"

"The very same doctor," continued Bussy, "who dressed a wound in the side of a gentleman last night."

"Correct."

"Of course it is. I recognized you at once; you had a light and gentle hand, and a skilful one, too."

"Thanks, monsieur, but I had no notion of finding you here."

"What were you looking for, then?"

"The house."

"Ha!" said Bussy, "you were looking for the house?"

"Yes."

"Then you are not acquainted with it?"

"How could I be?" answered the young man. "I had my eyes bandaged the whole road to it."

"Your eyes bandaged?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then you were really in this house?"

"In this one or in one beside it, I cannot say which, and so I am trying to find" —

"Good!" interrupted Bussy; "then it was not a dream."

"What do you mean? a dream!"

"It is as well to tell you, my dear friend, that I was under the impression the entire adventure, except the sword-thrust, as you can easily understand, was a dream."

"Well," answered the young doctor, "I must say you don't astonish me at all."

"Why?"

"I suspected there was a mystery under the affair."

"Yes, my friend, and a mystery I 'm determined to clear up; you 'll help me, will you not?"

"With the greatest pleasure."

"Good; and now two words."

"Say them."

"Your name?"

"Monsieur," said the young doctor, "I 'll make no bones about answering you. I know well that at such a question I should, to be in the fashion, plant myself fiercely on one leg, and, with hand on hip, say: 'What is yours, monsieur, if you please?' But you have a long sword and I have only a lancet; you look like a gentleman and I must seem to you a scamp, for I am wet to the skin and my back is all covered with mud. Therefore, I will answer you frankly. My name is Rémy le Haudouin."

"Thank you, monsieur, a thousand thanks. I am Count Louis de Clermont, Seigneur de Bussy."

"Bussy d'Amboise! the hero Bussy!" cried the young doctor, evidently delighted. "What, monsieur, you are the famous Bussy, the colonel who — who — oh!" —

"The same, monsieur," answered the nobleman, modestly. "And now that we know each other, be good enough to satisfy my curiosity, even though you are wet and dirty."

"The fact is," said the young man, glancing down at his belongings, all spotted with mud, — "the fact is, like Epaminondas the Theban, I shall have to remain three days at home, seeing that I have but one pair of breeches and one doublet. But pardon me — you were about to do me the honor of questioning me, I believe?"

"Yes, monsieur, I wished to ask you how you happened to enter that house."

"The answer will be at once very simple and very complex, as you are going to see," said the young man.

"To the point, then."

"M. le Comte, pray excuse me, until now I have been so embarrassed that I forgot to give you your title."

"Oh, that 's of no consequence; continue."

"This, then, is what happened, M. le Comte. I live in the Rue Beautreillis, about five hundred yards from here. I am but a poor surgeon's apprentice, though not an unskilful one, I assure you."

"I know something about that," said Bussy.

"And I have studied very hard, but that has not brought me patients. My name, as I have told you, is Rémy le Haudouin: Rémy, my Christian name; and Le Haudouin because I was born at Nanteuil le Haudouin. Now, about a week ago, a man was brought to me who had had his belly cut open by a knife, just behind the Arsenal. I put back the intestines, which protruded, in their place, and sewed up the skin so neatly that I won a certain reputation in the neighborhood, to which I attribute my good fortune in being awakened last night by a thin, musical voice."

"A woman's!" cried Bussy.

"Oh, don't jump at conclusions, if you please, monsieur; although I am but a rustic, I am sure it was the voice of a servant. I ought to know what 's what in that regard, for I am a good deal more familiar with the voices of the maids than of their mistresses."

"And what did you do next?"

"I rose and opened the door, but scarcely was I on the landing when two little hands, not very soft, and not very hard. either, tied a bandage over my eyes."

"Without saying anything?" inquired Bussy.

"Well, no; she said: 'Come along; do not try to see where you are going; be discreet; here is your fee.'"

"And this fee was" —

A purse filled with pistoles which she thrust into my hand."

"Ha! and what was your answer?"

"That I was ready to follow my charming guide. I did not know whether she was charming or not, but I thought the epithet, though it might be a little exaggerated, could do no harm."

"And you followed without making any observation or requiring any guarantee?"

"I have often read of this sort of thing in books, and noticed that it always produced agreeable results for the physician. I followed on, therefore, as I have had the honor of telling you; the path by which I was conducted was very hard; it was freezing, and I counted four hundred, four hundred and fifty, five hundred, and, finally, five hundred and two steps."

"You did well," said Bussy; "it was prudent; you must have been then at the door?"

"I cannot have been far from it, since I have now counted up to four hundred and ninety-nine paces; unless that artful jade, and I suspect her of the foul deed, made me take a round-about course."

"Yes, but even though she were shrewd enough to think of such a thing," said Bussy, "she must, or else the very devil 's in it, have given some indication — uttered some name?"

"She did not."

"But you must have noticed something yourself."

"I noticed all that a person can notice who is forced to substitute his fingers for his eyes; that is to say, a door with nails; behind the door, an alley; at the end of the alley, a staircase."

"On the left?"

"Yes. I even counted the steps."

"How many?"

"Twelve."

"And then?"

"A corridor, I believe; for three doors were opened by some one or other."

"Go on."

"Next I heard a voice. Ah, there was no doubt this time! — it was the voice of a lady, soft and sweet."

"Yes, yes, it was hers."

"Undoubtedly, it was hers."

"I am sure of it."

"Well, it 's something gained to be sure of something. Then I was shoved into the room where you were lying, and I was told to take off the bandage from my eyes."

"I remember."

"Then I noticed you."

"Where was I?"

"Lying on a bed."

"A bed of white damask, embroidered with flowers in gold?"

"Yes."

"In a room hung with tapestry?"

"Exactly."

"With a painted ceiling?"

"You 're right again; in addition, there was between two windows"—

"A portrait?"

"Why, your accuracy surprises me."

"Representing a young woman of about eighteen or twenty?"

"Yes."

"Blonde?"

"Quite correct."

"Beautiful as an angel?"

"Far more so."

"Bravo! What did you do next?"

"I dressed your wound."

"And very well you dressed it, too, by my faith."

"As well as I could."

"Oh, you did it admirably, my dear monsieur, admirably. This morning the wound was quite healthy-looking, nearly healed."

"That is due to a salve I have composed, which is, in my opinion, marvellously effective, for, as I have not been able to try experiments on others, I have often tried them on myself; I have made holes in several places in my skin, and, I give you my good word, these wounds always healed in a couple of days."

"My dear Monsieur Rémy, you are delightful, and I have already got to like you very much. But tell us what occurred after."

"Occurred after? You fainted again. The voice asked about you."

"Where was she when she did so?"

"In the room next yours."

"So that you did not see her?"

"No, I did not see her."

"But you answered?"

"That the wound was not dangerous, and would disappear in twenty-four hours."

"Did she seem pleased?"

"Delighted; since she exclaimed, 'Oh, thank God. How happy it makes me!'"

"She said, 'How happy it makes me'? My dear M. Rémy, I will make your fortune. What next?"

"Next, all was ended. I had dressed your wound and had nothing further to do there; then the voice said to me: 'M. Rémy'" —

"The voice knew your name?"

"Apparently; I suppose some report of the stab I had treated previously, and which I have told you about, had reached there."

"Of course. So the voice said: 'M. Rémy'" —

"'Be a man of honor to the end; do not compromise a poor woman who has yielded to a sentiment of humanity: replace your bandage, without attempting to practise any trickery on your guide on your return.'"

"You promised?"

"I pledged my word."

"And you kept it?"

"Why, that is evident," said the young man, naively, "since I am searching for the door."

"Well," said Bussy, "your behavior is splendid, chivalrous; and, although I am sorry for it at bottom, shake hands, Monsieur Rémy."

And Bussy, full of enthusiasm, tendered his hand to the young doctor.

"Monsieur!" said Rémy, embarrassed.

"Shake hands, I say; you deserve to be a gentleman."

"Monsieur," said Rémy, "it would redound to my eternal glory to shake hands with the valiant Bussy d'Amboise, but meanwhile I have a scruple."

"What is it?"

"There are ten pistoles in the purse."

"Well?"

"It is too much for a man who is glad to get a fee of five sous for a visit, when he gets anything at all; and I was searching for the house" —

"To return the purse?"

"Of course."

"Too much delicacy, my dear Monsieur Rémy, I assure you; you have earned this money honorably, and it belongs to you."

"You think so?" said Rémy, much relieved.

"I am as certain as any one could be; besides, it is not the lady who is in your debt, for I am not acquainted with her, nor is she with me."

"There! you see well that I am bound to restore it for a better reason still."

"Oh, I meant only that I, too, was in your debt."

"You in my debt?"

"Yes, and I will discharge it. What are you doing in Paris? Come, now, make a clean breast of it, my dear Monsieur Rémy, — give me your confidence."

"What am I doing at Paris? Nothing at all, M. le Comte; but I could do something if I had patients."

"Well, as good luck would have it, you have come just in time. What would you say to me for a patient? You can never meet with a better one. Not a day passes that I do not cripple the finest handiwork of the Creator or that the finest handiwork of the Creator does not cripple me. Come, now, will you undertake the task of mending the holes I make in others and that others make in me?"

"Ah, M. le Comte, I am too insignificant to" —

"Quite the contrary. Devil take me if you are n't the very man I want! You have a hand as light as a woman's, and that, with your salve" —

"Monsieur!"

"You must live with me; you will have your own apartments and your own servants. I pledge you my word, if you do not accept you will break my heart. Besides, your task is not ended. My wound requires a little more tending, my dear Monsieur Rémy."

"M. le Comte," replied the young doctor, "I am so enchanted that I do not know how to express my delight. I will work; I shall have patients!"

"Why, no; don't I tell you I want you for myself alone? — including my friends, of course. And now, do you remember anything else?"

"Nothing."

"Then, help me to find my way, that is, if you possibly can."

"But how?"

"Let us see — you are observant: you count steps, feel along walls, notice voices. Now, how is it that, after I had

gone through your hands, I suddenly found myself carried from this house and dumped on one of the slopes of the ditches of the Temple ?"

"You ?"

"Yes — I — Had you anything to do with that transportation ?"

"No; on the contrary I should have opposed it, had I been consulted. The cold might have done you serious injury."

"Then I am completely at sea," said Bussy. "Would you mind searching a little longer with me."

"Whatever you wish, monsieur, I wish; but I am afraid it would be very useless; all those houses are alike."

"As you like," returned Bussy. "We must only hope to have better luck during the daytime."

"Yes, but then we shall be seen."

"Well, then, we must make inquiries."

"We shall do so, monsieur."

"And we 'll succeed. Believe me, Rémy, now that we have something real to go upon and that there are two of us at work, we 'll succeed."

CHAPTER XI.

THE KIND OF MAN M. BRYAN DE MONSOREAU, THE GRAND HUNTSMAN, WAS.

It was not joy, it was almost delirium that agitated Bussy, when he had acquired the certainty that the woman of his dream was a reality, and that this same woman had bestowed on him the generous hospitality the vague remembrance of which was kept by him deep down in his heart.

Consequently he would not release the young doctor, whom he had just elevated to the position of his physician in ordinary. Dirty as he was, Rémy had to get into Bussy's litter. The count was afraid, if he lost sight of him for a moment, the young doctor might disappear like another vision; he determined to bring him to the Hôtel de Bussy, put him under lock and key for the night, and see on the next day whether he should restore him to liberty or not.

During the entire journey he bombarded him with question after question; but the answers turned in the same limited

circle we have just traced. Rémy le Haudouin knew very little more than Bussy, except that, having been awake all the time, he was quite certain he had not dreamed.

But for the man who is beginning to fall in love — and that such was the case with Bussy was apparent at a glance — it is even a pleasure to have some one near with whom he can talk of the object of his affections. Rémy, it is true, had not seen the woman; but that was really a merit in Bussy's eyes, as he had the better chance of convincing him how superior she was to her portrait.

Bussy would have liked to talk the whole night about this unknown lady, but Rémy entered on his functions as doctor at once and insisted on the wounded man sleeping, or, at least, going to bed; fatigue and pain gave the same counsel to our fine gentleman, and these three forces together carried the day.

But before he did so, he took care to install his new guest in the three rooms on the third story of the Hôtel Bussy which had formerly been occupied by himself. Then, being quite confident that the young physician, satisfied with his new lodgings and with the good fortune bestowed on him by Providence, would not slip away clandestinely from the mansion, he descended to the splendid apartment he slept in himself on the first floor.

When he awoke the next morning he found Rémy standing by his bedside. The young doctor had passed the whole night in doubting of the reality of the good fortune that had dropped on him from the skies, and he longed for Bussy to awake, to find out whether he, like the count, had not dreamed, too.

"Well," asked Rémy, "how do you feel?"

"Could n't feel better, my dear Æsculapius; and I hope you find yourself comfortable, also."

"So comfortable, my worthy protector, that I would not change places with King Henri, though he must have got over a good deal of ground yesterday on the road to heaven. But that is not the question. Will you let me see the wound?"

"Here it is."

And Bussy turned on his side to allow the young man to take off the bandage.

The wound was progressing most favorably; in fact, was nearly healed. Bussy was happy, had slept well, and, sleep

and happiness having come to the aid of the surgeon, the latter had almost nothing to do further.

"Well," asked Bussy, "what do you say now, Master Ambroise Paré?"

"I say that I hardly venture to confess you are nearly cured, for fear you might send me back to the Rue Beautreillis, five hundred and two paces from the famous house."

"Which we are sure to find again, are we not, Rémy?"

"I have no doubt of it."

"Well, my dear fellow," said Bussy, warmly shaking his hand, "we 'll go there together."

"Monsieur," returned Rémy, with tears in his eyes, "you treat me as your equal."

"I do so because I love you. Does that annoy you?"

"On the contrary," cried the young man, seizing Bussy's hand and kissing it; "on the contrary, I was afraid I had not heard aright. Oh, Monseigneur de Bussy, you will make me go wild with joy!"

"Why, not at all. All I ask is that you love me a little in your turn, regard this house as your home, and allow me to go with the court and witness the presentation of the *estortuaire*[1] by the grand huntsman."

"Ah," said Rémy, "so now we are ready for fresh follies."

"Oh, no; on the contrary, I promise you I 'll be very reasonable."

"But you will have to ride?"

"Yes, hang it! that is indispensable."

"Have you a horse of gentle temper and, at the same time, a good goer."

"I have four to choose from."

"Then select for to-day's ride the sort of a horse you would select for the lady of the portrait; you remember her, don't you?"

"I should think I did! Ah, Rémy, you have, in good sooth, found the way to my heart forever. I dreaded awfully you would hinder me going to this hunt, or rather semblance of a hunt, for the ladies of the court, and even a considerable number of citizens' wives and daughters, will be admitted to it. Now, Rémy, my dear Rémy, you understand clearly that the lady of the portrait must naturally belong either to the

[1] The *estortuaire* was a staff presented by the grand huntsman to the king, for the purpose of thrusting aside the branches when he was riding at full gallop.

court or to the city; though, certainly, she cannot be a mere citizen's wife or daughter: the tapestries, the pictured ceiling, the bed of damask and gold, and, in a word, all that luxury, accompanied by such refinement and good taste, reveals a woman of rank, or, at all events, a wealthy woman. Now, if I were to meet her yonder!"

"Anything is possible," answered Rémy, philosophically.

"Except finding the house," sighed Bussy.

"And getting into it when we have found it," added Rémy.

"Oh, I don't think there will be any trouble about that when I get to it," said Bussy. "I have a plan."

"What is it?"

"Get some one to pink me again."

"Good!" said Rémy. "Now I 'm hopeful you 'll keep me."

"Be easy on that point," answered Bussy. "I seem to have known you twenty years, and I pledge you my word as a gentleman I don't believe I could exist without you now."

The handsome face of the young practitioner glowed with an expression of unutterable delight.

"Well, then," said he, "it 's settled: you go a-hunting in search of the lady, and I go back to Beautrellis in search of the house."

"'T would be curious if we both succeeded," said Bussy.

And upon this they separated, more like two friends than master and servant.

A great hunting-party had, in fact, been commanded to meet in the Bois de Vincennes on the occasion of the entrance on the functions of his office by M. Bryan de Monsoreau, who had been appointed grand huntsman a few weeks before. The procession on the day previous and the excessive penitence of the King, who began his Lent on Shrove Tuesday, had led to the belief that he would not be present at the hunt in person; for whenever he fell into one of his devotional fits he never left the Louvre for weeks sometimes, unless, in order to spend his time in the practice of the severest austerities, he entered a convent. But the court now learned to its great astonishment that, about nine in the morning, the King had set out for the Castle of Vincennes and would hunt the stag along with his brother, the Duc d'Anjou, and the rest of the courtiers.

The rendezvous was at Point Saint-Louis, a cross-road so named at the time, it was said, because the famous oak under which the martyr king administered justice could still be seen

there. All were, then, assembled at nine, when the new official, an object of general curiosity, as he was a stranger to almost every one, appeared on a magnificent black steed.

All eyes were directed toward him.

He was a tall man, about thirty-five years old; his face was scarred by the smallpox, and, according to the emotions he experienced, his swarthy complexion was tinged with spots that came and went, impressing the observer most disagreeably, and inclining him to study the countenance more at length, a scrutiny which few countenances can very well bear.

In fact, it is the first impression that evokes our sympathies: the honest smile on the lips, the frank look in the eyes, will find responsive smiles and looks.

Clad in a jacket of green cloth braided with silver, a baldric on which the royal arms were embroidered, with a long feather in his cap, a boar-spear in his left hand, and the *estortuaire* for the King in his right, M. de Monsoreau might be taken for an awe-inspiring lord, but, certainly, not for a fine gentleman.

"Fie! monseigneur," said Bussy to the Duc d'Anjou, "you ought to be ashamed of bringing us such an ugly phiz as that from your Government. Is he a sample of the sort of gentlemen your favor pitches on in the provinces? Devil take me if you find another like him in all Paris, which is a good-sized city and has its fair share of scarecrows. And he has a red beard also; I did not perceive it at first — it is an additional attraction. It is said, and I warn your Highness I did not believe a word of it, that you forced the King to make this fellow grand huntsman."

"M. de Monsoreau has served me well," said the prince, shortly, "and I reward him."

"Well spoken, monseigneur; such gratitude on the part of princes is only the more beautiful because it is so rare. But if that was your motive, I, too, monseigneur, have served you well, if I am not greatly mistaken, and I beg you to believe me when I state that I would wear the grand huntsman's jacket far more gracefully than that long-legged spectre."

"I never heard," answered the Duc d'Anjou, "that a person had to be an Apollo or an Antinous in order to fill an office at court."

"You never heard so, monseigneur?" said Bussy, in his coolest manner; "that is astonishing."

"I examine the heart, not the face," replied the prince; "the services that have been performed, not the services that have been promised."

"Your Highness must, I am afraid, think me very inquisitive," rejoined Bussy, "but I am really anxious to discover what service this Monsoreau has been able to do you."

"Ah! Bussy," said the prince, sharply, "you have just spoken the truth: you are very inquisitive, far too inquisitive, in fact."

"That is so like a prince!" went on Bussy, with his customary freedom; "princes will question you about anything and everything, and always insist on an answer; while if you question them on the most trifling point, you may be sure you'll get no reply."

"True," returned the Duc d'Anjou; "but do you know what you ought to do if you are anxious for information?"

"No."

"Go ask M. de Monsoreau himself."

"I see!" said Bussy; "upon my word, you're right, monseigneur, and, as he is a simple gentleman like myself, I have, at least, a remedy if he does not answer."

"Of what kind?"

"I'll tell him he's impertinent." And thereupon, turning his back on the prince, under the gaze of his friends, and hat in hand, he carelessly approached M. de Monsoreau, who, mounted in the middle of the circle, and the target for all eyes, was waiting with marvellous composure until the King should relieve him from the troublesome glances that fell on his person.

When he saw Bussy approach, gay and smiling, with hat in hand, his face brightened a little.

"Excuse me, monsieur," said Bussy, "but I see you are quite alone. Is it because the favor you now enjoy has already won you as many enemies as you may have had friends, a week ago, before you were appointed grand huntsman?"

"By my faith, M. le Comte," answered the Seigneur de Monsoreau, "I would not swear but that you are right; I would even make a wager on it. But might I know to what I am to attribute the honor you do me in coming to disturb me in my solitude?"

"Oh," said Bussy, boldly, "you owe it to the great admiration which the Duc d'Anjou has made me feel for you."

"How, pray?"

"By his account of the exploit that gained for you the office of grand huntsman."

M. de Monsoreau became so frightfully pale that the marks of the small-pox in his face turned to so many black points on his yellow skin. At the same time the look he gave Bussy foreboded a violent storm.

Bussy saw he had gone the wrong way about the matter; but he was not the sort of man that retreats; on the contrary, he was one of those who make up for being indiscreet by being insolent.

"You say, monsieur," answered the grand huntsman, "that Monseigneur has given you an account of my last exploit?"

"Yes, monsieur, and quite at length," said Bussy. "This it was, I confess, that made me long to hear the story from your own lips."

M. de Monsoreau clutched the spear convulsively, as if he felt violently inclined to use it as a weapon against Bussy.

"In good sooth, monsieur," said he, "I was quite willing to yield to your request, in recognition of your courtesy; but, unfortunately, as you see, the King is coming, and so I have not time; you will have the goodness, then, to adjourn the matter to another occasion."

Monsoreau was right; the King, mounted on his favorite steed, a handsome Spanish jennet of a light bay color, was galloping from the Castle to the Point Saint-Louis.

Bussy, looking round, encountered the eyes of the Duc d'Anjou; the prince was laughing, an evil smile on his face.

"Master and servant," thought Bussy, "have both an ugly grimace when they laugh; what must it be, then, when they weep?"

The King was fond of handsome, amiable faces; he was, therefore, anything but pleased with that of M. de Monsoreau, which he had seen once before, and which pleased him as little the second time as it had the first. Still, he accepted graciously enough the *estortuaire* with which Monsoreau presented him, kneeling, as was the custom.

As soon as the King was armed, the whippers-in announced that a stag was started, and the chase began.

Bussy had stationed himself on the flank of the party, so that every one might pass in front of him; he scrutinized the faces of the women, without exception, to see if he could not discover the original of the portrait; but it was all useless.

There were plenty of beautiful faces, plenty of captivating faces, at this hunt, where the grand huntsman was to make his first appearance; but not the charming face for which he sought.

He was compelled to put up with the conversation and company of his ordinary friends. Antraguet, gay and talkative as ever, was a source of great relief to him in his disappointment.

"That's a hideous grand huntsman we 've got," he said to Bussy; "what do you think of him?"

"He 's horrible; what a family he must have if the children who have the honor to belong to him are at all like him! Be good enough to show me his wife."

"The grand huntsman is still unmarried, my dear," replied Antraguet.

"How do you know that?"

"From Madame de Veudron, who thinks him very handsome, and would willingly make him her fourth spouse, as Lucretia Borgia did Count d'Este. Look! her bay is always just behind Monsoreau's black charger."

"What estate owns him as its lord?"

"Oh, he has any number of estates."

"Where?"

"Near Anjou."

"Then he 's rich?"

"So I have been told; but he 's nothing more; he belongs, it seems, to the lower class of nobles."

"And who is the mistress of this country squire?"

"He has none; the worthy gentleman has decided to be without a parallel among his fellows. But see, the Duc d'Anjou is beckoning to you; you had better go to him at once."

"Ah, faith, I 'll let Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou wait. This man piques my curiosity. I think him a very singular person. I don't know why — you get this sort of ideas into your head, you know, the first time you meet people. I don't know why, but I expect to have a crow to pluck with this fellow, some time or other; and then, his name, Monsoreau!"

"'Mont de la Souris,'"[1] returned Antraguet; "that's the etymology of it. My old abbé told me all about it this morning; 'Mons Soricis.'"

"I accept the interpretation," answered Bussy.

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[1] Mousehill.

"But — stay a moment, please," cried Antraguet, suddenly.

"Why?"

"Livarot knows something about it."

"About what?"

"Mons Soricis. They are neighbors."

"I say, Livarot! tell us all you know at once."

Livarot drew near.

"Come here quick, Livarot. What about Monsoreau?"

"Eh?" replied the young man.

"We want you to inform us about Monsoreau."

"With pleasure."

"Will the story be long?"

"No, very short; four or five words will be enough to tell you what I think and know of him: I'm afraid of him!"

"Good! and now that you have told us what you think, tell us what you know."

"Listen! I was returning, one night" —

"A terrible opening that," said Antraguet.

"Will you let me finish?"

"Go on."

"I was returning one night from a visit to my uncle D'Entragues, through the forest of Méridor, about six months ago, when suddenly I heard a frightful cry, and a white nag, with an empty saddle, rushed by me into the thicket. I pushed on as hard as I could, and, at the end of a long avenue, darkened by the shadows of night, I espied a man on a black horse; he was not galloping, he was flying. The same stifled cry was heard anew, and I was able to distinguish in front of his saddle the form of a woman and his hand pressed over her mouth. I had my hunting arquebuse with me, and you know I'm no bungler with it as a rule. I took aim, and, upon my soul, I should have killed him only that my match went out at the wrong moment."

"And then?" asked Bussy, "what happened next?"

"Next I asked a woodcutter who was the gentleman on the black horse that was kidnapping a woman? and he answered: 'M. de Monsoreau.'"

"Well," said Antraguet, "it is not so unusual a thing to carry off women, is it, Bussy?"

"Yes; but, at least, the women are allowed to scream."

"And who was the woman?" asked Antraguet.

"That is a thing I could never learn."

"I tell you," said Bussy, "this man is decidedly remarkable, and he interests me."

"However, this precious nobleman enjoys an abominable reputation," said Livarot.

"You have some other facts?"

"No, none. He never does evil openly, and is even rather kind to his tenants; but with all that, the dwellers in the district that has the good fortune to own him fear him like hell-fire; still, as he is a hunter like Nimrod, not before the Lord, perhaps, but before the devil, the King will never have a better grand huntsman; a far better one than Saint-Luc, for whom the post was first intended until the Duc d'Anjou interfered and choused him out of it."

"Do you know the Duc d'Anjou is still calling for you?" said Antraguet to Bussy.

"Good! let him go on calling; and, by the way, do you know what is being said about Saint-Luc?"

"No; is he still the King's prisoner?" asked Livarot, laughing.

"I suppose he must be," said Antraguet, "as he is not here."

"Quite wrong, my dear fellow; he started at one, last night, to visit his wife's estates."

"Exiled?"

"It looks that way."

"Saint-Luc exiled? Impossible."

"My dear, it's as true as the Gospel."

"According to *Saint Luke?*"

"No, according to Maréchal de Brissac, who told it me this morning with his own lips."

"Ah! that is a novel and interesting bit of news; I'm pretty sure this will do harm to our Monsoreau."

"I have it!" said Bussy.

"Have what?"

"I have hit on it."

"Hit on what?"

"The service he rendered M. d'Anjou."

"Saint-Luc?"

"No, Monsoreau."

"Really?"

"Yes, devil take me if I haven't! You'll see, you fellows; come along with me."

And Bussy, followed by Livarot and Antraguet, set his horse to a gallop and came up with the Duc d'Anjou, who, tired of making signs to him, was now a considerable distance away.

"Ah! monseigneur," he cried, "what a valuable man that M. de Monsoreau is!"

"You think so, do you?"

"I am amazed!"

"Then you spoke to him?" said the prince, with a sneer.

"Certainly, and I found him quite a refined person."

"And you asked him what he had done for me?" inquired the prince, with the same sneering laugh.

"Of course; it was for that purpose I accosted him."

"And he answered you?" said the prince, apparently gayer than ever.

"At once, and with a politeness for which I am infinitely obliged to him."

"And now let us hear his reply, my doughty braggadocio," said the Duc d'Anjou.

"He confessed, with all possible courtesy, that he was your Highness' purveyor."

"Purveyor of game?"

"No, purveyor of women."

"What do you mean?" said the prince, his face becoming dark as midnight in a moment. "What does this jesting signify, Bussy?"

"It means, monseigneur, that he kidnaps women for you on his big black steed, and that, as they are doubtless ignorant of the honor intended them, he claps his hand over their mouths to prevent them from screaming."

The prince frowned, wrung his hands convulsively in his rage, turned pale, and set his horse to so furious a gallop that Bussy and his comrades were soon left far behind.

"Aha! it seems to me the joke told," said Antraguet.

"And all the better because everybody does not seem to regard it as a joke," continued Livarot.

"The devil!" exclaimed Bussy; "it looks as if I had touched our good prince on the raw."

A moment later M. d'Anjou was heard shouting:

"I say, Bussy! Where are you? Come here, I say."

"Here I am, monseigneur," answered Bussy, drawing nigh.

The prince was in a fit of laughter.

"Upon my word, monseigneur," said Bussy, "what I have been telling you must have been awfully droll."

"No, Bussy, I am not laughing at what you told me."

"So much the worse; I should have been well pleased were that the case; it would be a great merit in me to make a prince laugh who laughs so seldom."

"I laugh, my poor Bussy, because you have invented a false story to find out the true one."

"No, monseigneur; devil take me if I have not told you the truth."

"Well, then, now that we are by ourselves, tell me your little story. Where did all that happen?"

"In the forest of Méridor, monseigneur."

This time the prince turned pale again, but he said nothing.

"Beyond a doubt," thought Bussy, "he has had some connection or other with the ravisher on the black horse and the woman to whom the white nag must have belonged."

"Come, monseigneur," added Bussy, laughing in his turn, now that the prince laughed no longer, "if there is a way of pleasing you better than any we have adopted hitherto, tell us about it; we'll have no scruple in choosing it, though we may have to enter into competition with M. de Monsoreau."

"Yes, by heavens, Bussy," said the Duc d'Anjou, "there is one, and I'll point it out to you!"

The prince led Bussy aside.

"Listen," said he. "I met a charming woman lately at church. Although she was veiled, certain features in her face reminded me of a woman with whom I was once in love; I followed her, found out where she lived, bribed her maid, and have a key of the house."

"Well, monseigneur, as far as I can see, everything is in your favor."

"But she is said to be a prude, although free, young, and beautiful."

"Oh! that staggers belief. Is not your Highness romancing?"

"Listen! You are brave and you love me, or, at least, say you do."

"I have my days."

"For being brave?"

"No, for loving you."

"Good! Is this one of your days?"

"I will try to make it one, if I can thereby serve your Highness."

"Well, then, I want you to do for me what most people do only for themselves."

"Indeed!" said Bussy; "perhaps your Highness wishes me to pay my court to your mistress in order to discover if she is as virtuous as she is beautiful? I have no objection."

"No, but to find out if some one else is not paying court to her."

"Ah, the thing is getting complicated; let us have an explanation, monseigneur."

"I would have you watch and find out who is the man that visits her."

"There is a man, then?"

"I 'm afraid so."

"A lover, or a husband?"

"A jealous man, anyway."

"So much the better, monseigneur."

"Why so much the better?"

"It doubles your chances."

"You are very kind! In the meantime I should like to find out who the man is."

"And you would have me undertake the duty of informing you?"

"Yes, and if you consent to render me this service"—

"You 'll make me the next chief huntsman when the post is vacant?"

"I assure you, Bussy, I should be the more inclined to do so from the fact that I have never really done anything for you."

"Ah! so monseigneur has discovered that at last!"

"I pledge you my word I have been saying it to myself ever so long."

"In a whisper, as princes are in the habit of saying this sort of things."

"And now?"

"What, monseigneur?"

"Do you consent?"

"To spy on a lady?"

"Yes."

"Monseigneur, I do not, I confess, feel at all flattered by such a commission. I should prefer another."

"You offered to do me a service, Bussy, and you are drawing back already."

"Zounds, monseigneur, you are asking me to be a spy!"

"No! to be a friend. Besides, don't fancy I am offering you a sinecure; you may have to draw your sword."

Bussy shook his head.

"Monseigneur," said he, "there are certain things a person only does well when he does them himself; this is a case where even a prince must act on his own account."

"Then you refuse?"

"Most assuredly I do, monseigneur."

The prince frowned.

"I will follow your counsel, then," said he. "I will go myself, and if I am killed or wounded, I shall say that I begged my friend Bussy to venture on receiving or returning a sword-thrust for my sake, and that, for the first time in his life, he was prudent."

"Monseigneur," answered Bussy, "you said yesterday evening: 'Bussy, I hate all those minions of the King's chamber, who never lose a chance of insulting and gibing at us; now I want you to go to Saint-Luc's wedding, pick a quarrel with them, and make short work of them, if you can.' Monseigneur, I went, and went alone; there were five of them; I challenged them; they lay in wait for me, attacked me in a body, killed my horse, yet I wounded two and knocked a third senseless. To-day you ask me to wrong a woman. Excuse me, monseigneur; that is not one of the services an honorable man can render his prince, and I refuse."

"Just as you like," said the prince. "I will watch myself, or in company with Aurilly, as I have done before."

"I beg your pardon," said Bussy, through whose mind a light was breaking.

"Why?"

"May I ask you were you watching also the other day when you saw the minions lying in wait for me?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then the fair unknown lives near the Bastile?"

"Yes, opposite the Rue Sainte-Catherine."

"You're sure?"

"Yes, and also that it is a cut-throat quarter, a fact of which you have had some experience yourself."

"And has your Highness been there since that evening?"

"Yes, yesterday."

"And you saw?"

"A man hiding in corners, doubtless to see if any one was spying on him. He afterward kept obstinately in front of the door, because he perceived me, I imagine."

"And was this man alone, monseigneur?"

"Yes, for nearly half an hour."

"And then?"

"Another man joined him, with a lantern."

"Ah, indeed!"

"After this, the man in the cloak" — continued the prince.

"So the first man had a cloak?" interrupted Bussy.

"Yes. Then the man in the cloak and the man with the lantern talked together, and as they seemed inclined to remain there the whole night, I left them and returned."

"Disgusted with your second experiment?"

"Faith, yes, I confess it — so that, before poking my head into a house that may be a den of murderers" —

"You would not object to have one of your friends murdered there?"

"Nay, not so — but rather that a friend who does not happen to be a prince and has not the same enemies I have, especially if he is accustomed to adventures of the kind, should take note of the sort of danger I am likely to run and inform me of it."

"In your place, monseigneur, I should give the woman up."

"No."

"Why?"

"She is too beautiful."

"You say yourself you have scarcely seen her."

"I saw enough to remark she had magnificent fair hair."

"Ah!"

"Two glorious eyes."

"Ah! Ah!"

"A complexion the like of which I have never seen; and her shape is a marvel."

"Ah! Ah! Ah!"

"You understand it is rather hard to give up such a woman."

"Yes, monseigneur, I understand; and so your position gives me real pain."

"You are jesting."

"No, and the proof of it is that, if your Highness give me your instructions and point out the door to me, I will watch it."

"You have changed your mind, then?"

"Egad! monseigneur, the only person who is infallible is our Holy Father Gregory XIII.; only tell me what is to be done?"

"You must hide some distance from the door I'll show you, and, if a man enter, follow him until you ascertain who he is."

"Yes, but what if he shut the door on me when he enters?"

"I told you I had a key."

"Ah, true; the only thing to be feared is that I might follow the wrong man and the key belong to another door."

"No danger of a mistake; this door leads into an alley; at the end of the alley, on the left, is a staircase; you go up twelve steps, and then you're in the corridor."

"How can you know that, monseigneur, since you were never in the house?"

"Did I not tell you the maid is in my pay? She explained everything to me."

"*Tudieu!* what a thing it is to be prince! he has everything ready to his hand. Why, if it had been my case, monseigneur, I should have had to discover the house, explore the alley, count the steps, and feel my way in the corridor. It would have taken me an enormous length of time, and who knows if I should have succeeded, after all!"

"So, then, you consent?"

"Could I refuse anything to your Highness? But you'll come with me to point out the door."

"Not necessary. When we return from the hunt, we'll go a little out of our way, pass Porte Saint-Antoine, and then I'll show it to you."

"Nothing could be better! And what am I to do to the man if he come?"

"Nothing but follow him until you learn who he is."

"It's a rather delicate matter. Suppose, for example, this man is so indiscreet as to halt in the middle of the road and bring my investigations to a standstill?"

"You are at full liberty to adopt whatever plan pleases you."

"Then your Highness authorizes me to act as I should do in my own case?"

"Exactly."

"I will do so, monseigneur."

"Not a word of this to any of our young gentlemen."

"My word of honor on it!"

"And you 'll set out on your exploration alone?"

"I swear it."

"Very well, all 's settled; we shall return by the Bastile. I 'll point out the door, you 'll come home with me for the key — and to-night" —

"I take your Highness' place; it 's a bargain."

Bussy and the prince then joined the hunt, which M. de Monsoreau was conducting like a man of genius. The King was delighted with the punctuality displayed by the huntsman in arranging all the halts and relays. After being chased two hours, turned into an enclosure of twelve or fifteen miles, and seen more than a score of times, the animal was come up with, just at the point where he started.

M. de Monsoreau was congratulated by the King and the Duc d'Anjou.

"Monseigneur," said he to the latter, "I am very glad you think me worthy of your compliments, since it is to you I owe my post."

"But you are aware, monsieur," said the prince, "that, in order to continue to merit them, you must start this evening for Fontainebleau. The King will hunt the day after to-morrow and the days following, and a day will certainly not be more than enough to enable you to become acquainted with the forest."

"I know it, monseigneur, and I have given my people notice already. I am prepared to start to-night."

"Ah, that 's how it is, M. de Monsoreau!" said Bussy; "no more nights of rest for you. Well, you would be grand huntsman, and so you are. But the office you occupy entails the loss of fifty nights that other people have; it 's a lucky thing for you you 're not married, my dear M. de Monsoreau."

Bussy said this, laughing; the prince darted a piercing look at the grand huntsman; then turning round, he proceeded to congratulate the King on the evident improvement in his health since the night before.

As for Monsoreau, at the jest of Bussy he turned pale again, with that hideous paleness which gave him such a sinister aspect.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW BUSSY DISCOVERED BOTH PORTRAIT AND ORIGINAL.

The hunt was over about four in the evening, and at five, as if the King wished to anticipate the desire of the Duc d'Anjou, the whole court returned to Paris by way of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine.

M. de Monsoreau, under the pretext that he must set out at once, had taken leave of the princes, and proceeded with his men in the direction of Fromenteau.

When the King passed in front of the Bastile, he called the attention of his friends to the stern, gloomy appearance of the fortress; it was his method of reminding them of what they might expect, if, after being his friends, they became his enemies.

Many understood the hint, and became more lavish than ever of their expressions of reverence for his Majesty.

During this time, the Duc d'Anjou whispered to Bussy, who was riding close to him:

"Look well, Bussy; you see the wooden house on the right, with a little statue of the Virgin in the gable; follow the same line with your eye and count four houses, that of the Virgin included."

"It 's done," said Bussy.

"It is the fifth," said the prince, "the one just in front of the Rue Sainte-Catherine."

"I see it, monseigneur; stay, look yonder; at the blare of the trumpets announcing the King's approach, all the windows are crowded."

"Except those in the house I showed you," said the Duc d'Anjou; "they are closed."

"But one of the blinds is half open," answered Bussy, his heart beating terribly.

"Yes, but we can't see any one. Oh, the lady is well guarded, or else she guards herself! At all events, that is the house; I 'll give you the key at the hôtel."

Bussy flashed a glance through the narrow opening, but, although his eyes were then riveted on it, he could perceive nothing.

When they reached the Hôtel d'Anjou, the prince gave

Bussy the key, as he had promised, cautioning him to watch carefully. Bussy said he would be answerable for everything, and went to his hôtel.

"Well?" he said to Rémy.

"The question I was about to ask you, monseigneur?"

"You have discovered nothing?"

"The house is as hard to find by day as by night. I 'm in a regular quandary about the five or six houses near it."

"Then I fancy I have been luckier than you, my dear Le Hardouin."

"How is that, monseigneur? So you have been searching too?"

"No, I only passed through the street."

"And you recognized the door?"

"Providence, my dear friend, works in mysterious ways and is responsible for the most unforeseen results."

"Then you are quite certain?"

"I do not say I am quite certain, but I have hopes."

"And when shall I know you have been fortunate enough to have found the object of your search."

"To-morrow morning."

"In the meantime, do you need me?"

"Not at all."

"You do not wish me to follow you?"

"That is impossible."

"Be prudent, at least, monseigneur."

"Oh, your advice is useless; I am well known to be so."

Bussy dined like a man who is not at all sure where he will get his supper; then, at eight, he selected his best sword, stuck a pair of pistols in his belt, in spite of the edict the King had just issued, and had himself carried in his litter to the end of the Rue Saint-Paul. There he recognized the house with the Virgin's statue, counted the next four houses, made certain the fifth was the house he wanted, and, wrapped in his long, dark cloak, crouched in an angle of the Rue Sainte-Catherine, with his mind made up to wait two hours, and then, if nobody came, to act on his own account.

It was striking nine at Saint Paul's when Bussy went into his hiding-place. He was there hardly ten minutes when he saw two horsemen advancing through the darkness by the Porte de la Bastille. They halted near the Hôtel des Tournelles. One alighted, flung the reins to the second, who, very likely,

was a lackey, and, after watching him and the two horses go back the way they had come, until he lost sight of them, he proceeded toward the house confided to the watchfulness of Bussy.

When the stranger was near the house he made a circuit, apparently with the intention of exploring the neighborhood. Then, sure that he was not observed, he approached the door and disappeared.

Bussy heard the noise made by the door closing behind him.

He waited a moment, fearing this mysterious personage might remain awhile on the watch behind the wicket; but, when a few minutes had slipped by, he advanced in turn, crossed the road, opened the door, and, taught by experience, shut it noiselessly.

Then he turned round; the wicket was on a level with his eye, and, in all probability, it was the very wicket through which he had reconnoitred Quélus.

But he had something else to do; this was not what had brought him here. He felt his way slowly, touching both sides of the alley, and at the end, on the left, he came upon the first step of the staircase.

Here he stopped for two reasons: first, because his legs were giving way under him from emotion; and secondly, because he heard a voice which said:

"Gertrude, inform your mistress I am here, and wish to enter."

The order was given in too imperious a tone to admit of refusal; in an instant Bussy heard the voice of the servant answering:

"Pass into the drawing-room, monsieur; madame will be with you in a moment."

Bussy then thought of the twelve steps Rémy had counted; he did the same, and, at the end of his counting, found himself on the landing.

He recalled the corridor and the three doors, and advanced a few steps, holding in his breath and stretching out his hand, which came in contact with the first door, the one by which the unknown had entered. He went on again, found a second door, turned the key in the lock, and, shivering from head to foot, entered.

The room in which Bussy found himself was completely

dark, except in a corner, which was partially illuminated by the light in the drawing-room, a side door being open.

This light fell on the windows, — windows hung with tapestry! — the sight thrilled the young man's heart with ecstasy.

His eyes next turned to the ceiling; a part of it was also lit up by the same reflected beams, and he recognized some of the mythological figures he had seen before; he extended his hand — it touched the carved bed.

Doubt was no longer possible; he was again in the same chamber in which he had awakened on the night he received the wound to which he owed his hospitable reception.

Every fibre in his body thrilled anew when he touched that bed and inhaled the perfume that emanates from the couch of a young and beautiful woman.

Bussy hid behind the bed curtains and listened.

He heard in the adjoining apartments the impatient footsteps of the unknown, who paused at intervals, murmuring between his teeth:

"Is she never coming?"

At length a door opened — a door in the drawing-room seemingly parallel to the half-open door already mentioned. The floor creaked under the pressure of a small foot, the rustling of a silk dress reached Bussy's ears, and the young man heard a woman's voice, — a voice trembling at once with fear and scorn; it said:

"I am here, monsieur; what do you want with me now?"

"Oho!" thought Bussy, from behind his curtains, "if this man is the lover, I congratulate the husband."

"Madame," answered the man who was received in this freezing fashion, "I have the honor to inform you I must start for Fontainebleau to-morrow morning, and I have come to spend the night with you."

"Do you bring me news of my father?" asked the same feminine voice.

"Listen to me, madame."

"Monsieur, you know what was our agreement yesterday when I consented to become your wife; it was that, first of all, either my father should come to Paris or I should go to my father."

"Madame, we will start immediately after my return from Fontainebleau. I pledge you my word of honor. In the meantime" —

"Oh, monsieur, do not close that door, it is useless. I will not spend a single night, no, not a single night, under the same roof with you until I am reassured as to my father's fate."

And the woman who spoke so resolutely blew a little silver whistle which gave a shrill, protracted sound.

This was the method adopted for summoning servants in an age when bells had not been yet invented for domestic purposes.

At the same moment, the door through which Bussy had entered again opened and the young woman's maid appeared on the scene. She was a tall, robust daughter of Anjou, had been apparently on the watch for her mistress' summons, and had hurried to obey it as soon as heard.

After entering the drawing-room, she opened the door that had been shut.

A stream of light then flowed into the chamber where Bussy was stationed, and he recognized the portrait between the two windows.

"Gertrude," said the lady, "do not go to bed, and remain always within sound of my voice."

The maid withdrew by the way she had entered, without uttering a word, leaving the door of the drawing-room wide open, so that the wonderful portrait was entirely illuminated.

This placed the matter beyond all question in Bussy's eyes: the portrait was the one he had seen before.

He advanced softly to peep through the opening between the hinges of the door and the wall, but, soft as was his tread, just at the very moment he was able to look into the apartment, the floor creaked.

The lady heard it and turned: the original of the portrait! the fairy of his dream!

The man, although he had heard nothing, turned when the lady did.

It was the Seigneur de Monsoreau!

"Ha!" muttered Bussy, "the white nag — the kidnapped woman. I am assuredly on the point of listening to some terrible story."

And he wiped his face, which had become suddenly covered with perspiration.

Bussy, as we have stated, saw them both: the one standing, pale and scornful; the other seated, not so much pale as livid, moving his foot impatiently and biting his hand.

"Madame," said he, at length, "it is nearly time for you to give up acting the part of a persecuted woman, a victim; you are in Paris, you are in my house, and, moreover, you are now the Comtesse de Monsoreau, and that means you are my wife."

"If I am your wife, why refuse to lead me to my father? why continue to hide me from the eyes of the world?"

"Have you forgotten the Duc d'Anjou, madame?"

"You assured me that, once I was your wife, I had nothing to fear from him."

"Of course, but" —

"That is what you assured me."

"Undoubtedly, madame, but still it may be necessary to take certain precautions."

"Well, monsieur, take your precautions, and return when you have taken them."

"Diane," said the count, whose heart was visibly swelling with anger, "Diane, do not make sport of the sacred marriage tie. You would do well to take my advice in that regard."

"Prove to me, monsieur, that I have no reason to distrust my husband and I will respect the marriage!"

"And yet it seems to me the manner in which I have acted toward you might induce you to trust me."

"Monsieur, I think that, throughout this whole affair, my interest has not been your sole motive, or, even if it has, chance has done you good service."

"Ah, this is too much!" cried the count. "I am in my own house, you are my wife, and, though all hell should come to your aid, to-night you shall be mine."

Bussy laid his hand on his sword and took a step forward; but Diane did not give him time to appear.

"Hold!" said she, drawing a poniard from her girdle; "this is my answer."

And bounding into the room where Bussy was standing, she shut the door, double bolted it, and, while Monsoreau was striking it with his clenched fist and shouting empty threats, Diane said to him:

"Break but a particle of this door, monsieur, and — you know me! — you will find me dead on the threshold!"

"And have courage, madame," said Bussy, enfolding her in his arms, "you would have an avenger."

Diane was near crying out; but she felt that the only peril threatening her came from her husband. She remained, there-

fore, on the defensive, but dumb; trembling, but motionless. M. de Monsoreau kicked the door violently; then, evidently convinced that Diane would execute her threat, he left the drawing-room, slamming the door behind him. Next was heard the sound of footsteps in the corridor, growing gradually fainter, until it died away on the staircase.

"But you, monsieur," said Diane, when there was silence, and she had freed herself from Bussy's embrace and retreated a step, "who are you and how is it you are here?"

"Madame," said Bussy, opening the door and kneeling before Diane, "I am the man whose life you saved. Surely you cannot believe I have entered your room with evil intent or have formed any design against your honor?"

Thanks to the flood of light that now bathed the young man's noble face, Diane recognized him.

"You here, monsieur!" she cried, clasping her hands; "then you have heard everything!"

"Alas! yes, madame."

"But who are you? Your name, monsieur?"

"Madame, I am Louis de Clermont, Comte de Bussy."

"Bussy? you are the brave Bussy?" Diane cried, naïvely, without thought of the delight with which this exclamation filled the young man's heart. "Ah! Gertrude," she continued, addressing her maid, who ran in, quite terrified at hearing her mistress speaking to somebody, — "Gertrude, I have no longer anything to fear; from this moment my honor is under the safeguard of the most noble and loyal gentleman in France."

Then, holding out her hand to Bussy:

"Rise, monsieur," said she, "I know who you are; it is right you should know who I am."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHO DIANE DE MÉRIDOR WAS.

Bussy rose, entirely dazed by his happiness, and he and Diane entered the drawing-room which M. de Monsoreau had just quitted.

He gazed on Diane with mingled amazement and admiration. He had not dared to believe that the woman he had

sought could bear any comparison with the woman of his dream, and now the reality surpassed all that he had taken for a delusion of his imagination.

Diane was about eighteen or nineteen years old, and that is the same as saying she was in that splendid dawn of youth and beauty which gives to the flower its purest coloring, to the fruit its softest tints; there was no mistaking the expression of Bussy's look; Diane saw that she was admired, and had not the strength to interrupt the ecstasy of Bussy.

At length she perceived the necessity of breaking a silence which spoke too eloquently.

"Monsieur," said she, "you answered one of my questions, but not the other. I asked you who you were, and you told me; but I asked also how you came here, and that question you have not answered."

"Madame," answered Bussy, "I understood from the few words I heard during your conversation with M. de Monsoreau that my presence here had a natural connection with the events in your life you have graciously promised to relate to me. Have you not just told me you would let me know who you were?"

"Yes, count, I will tell you all," replied Diane. "I have often heard you spoken of as a man in whose courage, honor, and loyalty the most implicit confidence could be placed."

Bussy bowed.

"From the little you heard," continued Diane, "you must have learned that I was the daughter of Baron de Méridor, which means that I am the sole heiress of one of the oldest and noblest names in Anjou."

"There was a Baron de Méridor at Pavia," said Bussy, "who, though he might have escaped, surrendered his sword to the Spaniards when he knew his king was a prisoner; then he begged as a favor to be allowed to follow François I. into captivity at Madrid, and only left him after being commissioned to negotiate his ransom."

"He was my father, monsieur, and, if you ever enter the grand hall in the Castle of Méridor, you will see the portrait of François I., painted by Leonardo da Vinci and presented by the king in recognition of this devotion."

"Ah!" said Bussy, "in those times princes knew how to reward their servants."

"After his return from Spain my father married. His first

two children, sons, died. This was a great grief to the Baron de Méridor, who lost all hope of seeing his house continue in the male line. Soon after, the king died also, and the baron's sorrow turned to despair; he remained only a couple of years at court, and then shut himself up with his wife in the Castle of Méridor. It was there I was born, almost by a miracle, ten years after the death of my brothers.

"All the baron's love was now concentrated on the child of his old age; his affection for me was more than tenderness, it was idolatry. Three years after my birth, I lost my mother; it was a new affliction for my father; but I, too young to understand my loss, continued to smile, and my smiles consoled him.

"I grew up and developed under his eyes. Just as I was all to him, so he was all to me. Poor father! I reached my sixteenth year without suspecting the existence of any other world except that of my sheep, my peacocks, my swans, and doves, without dreaming that this life would ever end or wishing that it should.

"The Castle of Méridor was surrounded by vast forests belonging to the Duc d'Anjou; these forests were full of all kinds of deer, which were allowed to range undisturbed and had become quite tame in consequence; all were more or less friendly with me, some being so accustomed to my voice that they ran up whenever I called them; but my favorite among them was a doe — my poor, poor Daphne! — that would come and eat out of my hands.

"One spring, I did not see her for a month, and I believed her lost; I wept for her as I would have wept for a friend, when she suddenly made her appearance, followed by two little fawns; the poor things were at first afraid of me, but when the mother caressed my hand they felt they need not fear, and caressed in their turn.

"About this time the report spread that the Duc d'Anjou had appointed a deputy-governor over his province. Some days later it was learned that this deputy had arrived and was called the Comte de Monsoreau.

"Why did that name strike me to the heart the moment I heard it uttered? My only explanation of that painful sensation is that it was a presentiment.

"A week slipped by. The opinions expressed in the country about M. de Monsoreau were very emphatic and very different.

One morning the woods reëchoed to the sounds of horns and the baying of dogs. I ran to the park grating, and arrived just in time to see Daphne pass like a flash of lightning, pursued by a pack of hounds; her two fawns followed. An instant after, a man flew by mounted on a black steed that seemed to have wings; it was M. de Monsoreau.

"I cried aloud; I entreated mercy for my poor favorite; but he either did not hear my voice or paid no attention to it, so much was he engrossed by the ardor of the chase.

"Then, not thinking of the anxiety I was sure to cause my father if he noticed my absence, I ran in the direction the hunt had taken. I hoped to meet either the count or some of his people, and beseech them to stop this pursuit, which was breaking my heart.

"I ran about half a league without knowing where I was going; I had long lost sight of everything: doe, hounds, and hunters; soon I did not even hear the baying. I sank down at the foot of a tree and burst into tears. I remained there about a quarter of an hour, when I thought I could again distinguish in the distance the shouts of the hunters. I was not mistaken; the noise drew nearer and nearer, and was soon so loud that I became sure the hunt would pass by me in a moment. I rose at once and started in the direction from which I heard the cries.

"Nor was it long before I saw my poor Daphne speeding through a clearing; she was panting and had but a single fawn with her; the other, being tired out, had doubtless been torn to pieces by the hounds.

"The poor doe was visibly growing exhausted; the distance between her and her pursuers was less than at first; her running had changed to abrupt springs, and, when going by me, she belled dolefully.

"As before, I made vain efforts to make myself heard. M. de Monsoreau saw nothing but the animal he was pursuing. He flashed by even more quickly than the first time, sounding furiously the horn he held to his lips.

"Behind him, three or four whippers-in cheered on the hounds with horns and shouts. This whirlwind of barks and flourishes and cries passed like a tempest, vanished into the depths of the forest, and died away in the distance.

"I felt desperate; I said to myself that had I been only fifty yards farther, just at the edge of the clearing he had

crossed, he would have seen me, and would undoubtedly have saved the life of the poor animal on my intercession.

"This thought revived my courage; the hunt might pass a third time within view of me. I followed a path, with a line of beautiful trees on each side of it, which I knew led to the Castle of Beaugé. This castle belonged to the Duc d'Anjou, and was nearly nine miles from that of my father. The moment I saw it, it struck me I must have walked and run about nine miles, that I was alone and very far from home.

"I confess I felt a vague terror, and then only did I think of the imprudence and even impropriety of my conduct. I followed the edge of the pond, intending to ask the gardener, an excellent man, who used to present me a magnificent bouquet whenever I went there with my father, to act as my guide, when suddenly the shouts of hunters and baying of hounds struck on my ear again. I stood still and listened. The noise grew louder. I forgot everything. Almost at this very moment the doe bounded out of the wood on the other side of the pond, with the hounds nearly at her heels. She was alone — her second fawn had now been killed; the sight of the water seemed to renew her strength; she sucked in the cool air through her nostrils, and leaped into the pond, as if she wanted to come to me.

"At first she swam rapidly, as if she had recovered all her energy. I gazed on her, my eyes full of tears, my arms outstretched, and almost gasping like herself. But gradually she became exhausted, while the dogs, on the contrary, incited by the quarry that was now so near them, seemed more vigorous than ever. Soon the nearest hounds were within reach of her, and, stopped by their bites, she ceased swimming. At that moment M. de Monsoreau appeared on the outskirts of the wood, galloped up to the pond and jumped from his horse. Then collecting all my strength, I clasped my hands and cried out: 'Mercy!' Apparently, he saw me. I shouted again and louder than before. He heard me, for he raised his head. Then he ran down to a boat, unmoored it, and rowed quickly toward the animal, which was now struggling in the middle of the entire pack. I had not the least doubt that, touched by the sound of my voice, my entreaties and my gestures, he was hurrying to save her, when, as soon as he was within reach of Daphne, he quickly drew his hunting-knife; a sunbeam flashed upon the blade, then disappeared; I uttered a cry, the steel was

plunged into the poor beast's throat up to the handle. A stream of blood spurted out and dyed the waters of the pond crimson. The doe belled piteously, beat the water with her feet, rose for a moment, and fell back, dead.

"With a cry that was almost as agonizing as her own, I sank in a swoon on the slope of the pond.

"When I regained consciousness, I was lying in a chamber of the Castle of Beaugé, and my father, who had been sent for, was weeping by my pillow.

"As all that ailed me was a nervous attack produced by over-excitement, I was able to return to Méridor the next day. However, I had to keep my room for three or four days.

"On the fourth, my father told me that, while I was indisposed, M. de Monsoreau, who had seen me at the moment I was carried to the castle in a faint, had come to inquire after me; he was in despair when he learned he was the involuntary cause of my accident, and had asked to be permitted to offer his apologies, saying he could never be happy until he heard his pardon from my own lips.

"It would have been ridiculous to refuse him an interview; so, in spite of my repugnance, I yielded.

"The next day he presented himself. I had come to see the absurdity of my position; hunting is a pleasure which even women often share. I saw I must defend myself on account of an emotion that must have seemed nonsensical, and I made the affection I felt for Daphne my excuse.

"It was then the count's turn to affect compunction. He swore upon his honor, a score of times, that if he had had the slightest notion of the interest I took in his victim, he would have spared her with the greatest pleasure. But his protestations did not convince me, and he left without effacing from my heart the painful impression he had stamped upon it.

"Before retiring, the count asked my father's permission to return. He had been born in Spain and educated at Madrid, and it gave my father the greatest pleasure to talk with him of a country in which he had lived so long. Besides, as M. de Monsoreau was of gentle birth, deputy-governor of our province, and a favorite, it was said, of the Duc d'Anjou, there was no reason why he should not receive his request.

"Alas! from that moment my tranquillity, if not my happiness, was at an end. I soon perceived the impression I had made on the count. At first he came but once a week, then

twice, then every day. My father, to whom he showed the utmost respect, liked him. I saw with what pleasure the baron listened to his conversation, which was always that of a singularly able man. I did not venture to complain; and of what could I have complained? The count, while paying me all the courteous attentions of a lover, was as respectful as if I had been his sister.

"One morning my father entered my chamber, looking graver than usual, but there was an air of satisfaction blended with his gravity.

"'My child,' said he, 'you have always assured me that you would never like to leave me!'

"'Ah! father, are you not aware that it is my fondest desire to be with you forever?'

"'Well, my own Diane,' he continued, stooping to kiss me, 'it depends entirely on yourself whether that desire shall be realized or not.'

"I suspected what he was about to say, and I turned so frightfully pale that he paused before touching my forehead with his lips.

"'Diane, my child! Good heavens! what is the matter?'

"'It is M. de Monsoreau, is it not?' I stammered.

"'And supposing it is?' he asked, in amazement.

"'Oh, never, father! if you have any pity for your daughter, never!'

"'Diane, my darling, it is not pity I have for you, it is idolatry, as you well know; take a week to reflect and, if in a week'—

"'Oh, no, no,' I cried, 'it is needless,—not a week, not twenty-four hours, not a minute. No, no; oh, no!'

"And I burst into tears.

"My father worshipped me; he had never seen me weep before; he took me in his arms, and, with a few words, set me at my ease; he pledged his word of honor he would never again speak of this marriage.

"And now a month slipped by, during which I neither saw nor heard anything of M. de Monsoreau. One morning my father and I received an invitation to a great festival the count was to give in honor of the King's brother, who was about to visit the province from which he took his title. The festival was to be held in the town hall of Angers.

"With this letter came a personal invitation from the prince,

who wrote that he remembered having seen my father formerly at the court of King Henri, and would be pleased to meet him again.

"My first impulse was to entreat my father to decline, and I should certainly have persisted in my opposition if we had been invited by M. de Monsoreau alone; but my father feared a refusal of the prince's invitation might be viewed by his Highness as a mark of disrespect.

"We went to the festival, then. M. de Monsoreau received us as if nothing had passed between us; his conduct in my regard was neither indifferent nor affected; he treated me just as he did the other ladies, and it gave me pleasure to find I was neither the object of his friendliness nor of his enmity.

"But this was not the case with the Duc d'Anjou. As soon as he saw me his eyes were riveted on me and never left me the rest of the evening. I felt ill at ease under his gaze, and, without letting my father know my reason for wishing to retire from the ball, I urged him so strongly that we were the first to withdraw.

"Three days later, M. de Monsoreau came to Méridor. I saw him at a distance coming up the avenue to the castle, and retired to my chamber.

"I was afraid my father might summon me; but he did nothing of the kind, and, after half an hour, M. de Monsoreau left. No one had informed me of his visit, and my father never spoke of it; but I noticed that he was gloomier than usual after the departure of the deputy-governor.

"Some days passed. One morning, after returning from a walk in the grounds, I was told M. de Monsoreau was with my father. The baron had inquired for me two or three times, and on each occasion seemed to be specially anxious as to the direction I had taken. He gave orders that my return should be at once announced to him.

"And, in fact, I was hardly in my room when my father entered.

"'My child,' said he, 'a motive which it is unnecessary you should be acquainted with compels me to send you away for a few days. Ask no questions; you must be sure that my motive must be very urgent, since it forces me to remain a week, a fortnight, perhaps even a month, without seeing you.'

"I shuddered, although unconscious of the danger to which

I was exposed. But these two visits of M. de Monsoreau foreboded nothing good.

"'But where am I to go, father?' I asked.

"'To the Castle of Lude, to my sister, who will conceal you from every eye. It is necessary that the journey be made at night.'

"'Do you go with me?'

"'No, I must stay here to divert suspicion; even the servants must not know where you are going.'

"'But who are to be my escort?'

"'Two men upon whom I can rely.'

"'Oh, heavens! But father'—

"The baron kissed me.

"'My child,' said he, 'it cannot be helped.'

"I was so assured of my father's love that I made no further objection and asked for no explanation.

"It was agreed between us that Gertrude, my nurse's daughter, should accompany me.

"My father retired, after bidding me get ready.

"We were in the long days of winter, and it was a very cold and dreary evening; at eight o'clock my father came for me. I was ready, as he had directed; we went downstairs noiselessly and crossed the garden; he opened a little door that led into the forest; there we found a litter waiting and two men. My father talked to them at length, apparently enjoining them to take great care of me. After this, I took my place in the litter, and Gertrude sat down beside me. The baron kissed me for the last time, and we started.

"I was ignorant of the nature of the peril that threatened me and forced me to leave the Castle of Méridor. I questioned Gertrude, but she was quite as much in the dark as I was. I did not dare to ask information of my conductors, whom I did not know. We went along quietly by roundabout and devious paths, when, after travelling nearly two hours, at the very moment I was falling asleep, in spite of my anxiety, lulled by the smooth, monotonous motion of the litter, I was awakened by Gertrude, who seized me by the arm, as well as by the sudden stopping of the litter itself.

"'Oh, mademoiselle!' cried the poor girl; 'what is happening?'

"I passed my head through the curtains; we were sur-

rounded by six masked men on horseback; our own men, who had tried to defend us, were prisoners.

"I was too frightened to call for help; besides, who would have answered my appeal? The man who appeared to be the leader of the band advanced to the litter.

"'Do not be alarmed, mademoiselle,' said he; 'no harm is intended you, but you must follow us.'

"'Where?' I asked.

"'To a place where, so far from having any cause for fear, you will be treated as a queen.'

"This promise frightened me more than if he had threatened me.

"'My father! oh, my father!' I murmured.

"'Hear me, mademoiselle,' whispered Gertrude. 'I am acquainted with this neighborhood; you know I am devoted to you. I am strong; some misfortune will befall us if we do not escape.'

"The encouragement my poor maid was trying to give me was far from reassuring me. Still, it is comforting to know you have a friend when in trouble, and I felt a little relieved.

"'Do as you like, gentlemen,' I answered, 'we are only two poor women and cannot resist.'

"One of the men dismounted, took the place of our conductor, and changed the direction of the litter."

It may be easily understood with what profound attention Bussy listened to the narrative of Diane. The first emotions that inspire the dawning of a great love take the shape of an almost religious reverence for the beloved object. The woman the heart has chosen is raised by this very choice above others of her sex; she expands, becomes ethereal, divine; every one of her gestures is a favor she grants you, every one of her words a grace she bestows on you; does she look at you, you are delighted; does she smile on you, you are in ecstasy.

The young man had, therefore, allowed the fair speaker to unfold the story of her life, without daring to arrest it, without thought of interrupting it; not a single detail of that life, over which he felt he should be called upon to watch, but had a potent interest for him, and he listened to Diane's words, dumb, breathless, as if his very existence depended on catching every syllable.

So, when the young woman paused for a moment, doubtless

weakened by the twofold emotion she also experienced, an emotion in which all the memories of the past were blended with the present, Bussy had not strength to curb his anxiety, and, clasping his hands, he said:

"Oh, madame! continue."

It was impossible for Diane to doubt of the interest she inspired; everything in the young man's voice, gesture, and in the expression of his face, was in harmony with the entreaty his words contained. Diane smiled sadly, and resumed:

"We travelled nearly three hours; then the litter halted; I heard a door opening; some words were exchanged; the litter went on again, and, from the echoes that struck my ear, I concluded we were crossing a drawbridge. I was not mistaken; glancing through the curtains, I saw we were in the courtyard of a castle.

"What castle was it? Neither Gertrude nor I could tell. We had often tried during the journey to find in what direction we were going, but all we were able to perceive was an endless forest. Both of us believed that the paths selected by our abductors were purposely circuitous, and designed to deprive us of any knowledge of where we were.

"The door of our litter was opened and we were invited to alight by the same man that had spoken before.

"I obeyed in silence. Two men, doubtless belonging to the castle, came with torches to receive us. In accordance with the alarming promise given to us before, we were treated with the greatest respect. We followed the men with the torches, and were conducted into a richly furnished bed-chamber, which had seemingly been furnished during the most elegant and brilliant period of the reign of François I.

"A collation awaited us on a table sumptuously laid out.

"'You are at home, madame,' said the man who had already addressed me twice, 'and as, of course, you require the services of a maid, yours will not leave; her room is next to your own.'

"Gertrude and I exchanged a look of relief.

"'Every time you want anything,' continued the masked man, 'all you have to do is to strike the knocker of this door, and the man who is always on duty in the ante-chamber will be at your orders.'

"This apparent attention indicated that we would be kept in sight.

"The masked man bowed and passed out, and we heard him double lock the door behind him.

"And now we were alone, Gertrude and I.

"For a moment we did not stir, but gazed into each other's eyes by the glare of the two candelabra which lit up the supper table. Gertrude wished to speak; I made her a sign to be silent; some one, perhaps, was listening.

"The door of the room appointed for Gertrude was open; the same idea of visiting it occurred to both of us. She seized one of the candelabra, and we entered on tiptoe.

"It was a large closet, evidently designed to serve as a dressing-room to the bed-chamber. It had another door, parallel to the one by which we had entered. This door was ornamented likewise with a little chiselled knocker of copper, which fell on a plate of the same metal, the whole so exquisitely wrought that it might have been the work of Benvenuto Cellini.

"It was evident both doors opened into the same ante-chamber.

"Gertrude brought the light close to the lock. The door was double-locked.

"We were prisoners.

"When two persons, though of different rank, are in the same situation and are partakers of the same perils, it is marvellous how quickly their ideas chime in together and how easily they pass beyond conventional phrases and useless words.

"Gertrude approached me.

"'Mademoiselle,' she said in a low voice, 'did you notice that, after we left the yard, we mounted only five steps?'

"'Yes,' I answered.

"'Then we are on the ground floor?'

"'Certainly.'

"'So that,' she added, speaking still lower, and fastening her eyes on the outside shutters, 'so that'—

"'If these windows had no gratings'—I interrupted.

"'Yes, and if madame had courage'—

"'Courage!' I cried; 'oh, rest easy, I'll have plenty of it, my child.'

"It was now Gertrude's turn to warn me to be silent.

"'Yes, yes, I understand,' said I.

"Gertrude made me a sign to stay where I was, and returned to the bed-chamber with the cadelabrum.

"I had known already her meaning, and I went to the window and felt for the fastenings of the shutters.

"I found them, or rather Gertrude did, and the shutters opened.

"I uttered an exclamation of joy; the window was not grated.

"But Gertrude had already noticed the cause of this seeming negligence of our jailers; a large pond bathed the foot of the wall; we were much better guarded by ten feet of water than we certainly could have been by grating on our windows.

"However, on raising my eyes from the pond to the bank that enclosed it, I recognized a landscape that was familiar to me: we were prisoners in the Castle of Beaugé, where, as I have said before, I had often come with my father, and where I had been carried the day of my poor Daphne's death.

"The Castle of Beaugé belonged to the Duc d'Anjou.

"Then, as if a lightning flash had illumined my mind, I understood everything.

"I gazed down into the water with gloomy satisfaction: it would be a last resource against violence, a last refuge from dishonor.

"Twenty times during that night did I start up, a prey to unspeakable terrors; but nothing justified these terrors except the situation in which I was placed; nothing indicated that any one intended me harm; on the contrary, the whole castle seemed sunk in sleep, and only the cries of the birds in the marshes disturbed the silence of the night.

"Daylight appeared, but though it dispelled the menacing aspect which darkness lends to the landscape, it but confirmed me in my fears during the night; flight was impossible without external aid, and where could such aid come from?

"About nine there was a knock at our door; I passed into the room of Gertrude, telling her she might allow the persons who knocked to enter.

"Those who knocked, as I could see from the closet, were the servants of the night before; they removed the supper, which we had not touched, and brought in breakfast.

"Gertrude asked a few questions, but they passed out leaving them unanswered.

"Then I returned. The reason of my presence in the Castle of Beaugé and of the pretended respect by which I was surrounded was explained. The Duc d'Anjou had seen me at the

festival given by M. de Monsoreau; the Duc d'Anjou had fallen in love with me; my father, on learning of it, wished to save me from the pursuit of which I was doubtless to be the object. He had removed me from Méridor; but, betrayed by a treacherous servant, or by an unfortunate accident, he had failed, and I had fallen into the hands of the man from whom he had vainly tried to deliver me.

"I dwelt upon this explanation, the only one that was probable, and, in fact, the only one that was true.

"Yielding to the entreaties of Gertrude, I drank a cup of milk and ate a bit of bread.

"The morning passed in the discussion of wild plans of escape. About a hundred yards from us we could see a boat among the reeds with its oars; assuredly, if that boat had been within reach of us, my strength, intensified by my terror, would have sufficed, along with the natural strength of Gertrude, to extricate us from our captivity.

"During this morning nothing occurred to alarm us. Dinner was served just as breakfast had been; I could hardly stand, I felt so weak. I sat down at table, waited on only by Gertrude, for our guardians retired as soon as they had placed the food on the table. But, just when I broke my loaf, I found a note inside of it. I opened it hurriedly; it contained but these few words:

"'A friend is watching over you; you shall have news of him to-morrow, and of your father.'

"You can understand my joy; my heart beat as if it would burst through my breast. I showed Gertrude the note. The rest of the day was spent in waiting and hoping.

"The second night slipped by as quietly as the first; then came the hour of breakfast, for which we had watched so impatiently; for I was sure I should find another note in my loaf.

"I was not mistaken. The note was in these terms:

"'The person who carried you off is coming to the Castle of Beaugé at ten o'clock to-night; but at nine, the friend who is watching over you will be under your window with a letter from your father, which will inspire you with that confidence in him which, perhaps, you might not otherwise feel.

"'Burn this note.'

"I read this letter a second time and then threw it into the fire as I had been warned to do. The writing was completely

unknown to me, and I confess I was ignorant where it came from.

"Gertrude and I were lost in conjectures; we went to the window during the morning at least a hundred times in hope of seeing some one on the shore of the pond or in the depths of the forest; but we saw nothing.

"An hour after dinner some one knocked at the door; it was the first time any one had attempted to come into our room except at meal-time; however, as we had no means of locking ourselves in, we were forced to tell the person he might enter.

"It was the same man who had spoken to us at the litter and in the courtyard of the castle. I could not recognize him by his face, for he was masked at the time; but, at the first words he uttered, I recognized him by his voice.

"He presented a letter.

"'Whom do you come from, monsieur?' I asked.

"'Have the goodness to read this letter, mademoiselle,' said he, 'and you will see.'

"'But I will not read the letter until I know from whom it comes.'

"'Mademoiselle, you are your own mistress. My orders were to hand you this letter. I shall lay it at your feet, and, if you deign to pick it up, you can do so.'

"And the servant, who was apparently an equerry, to make good his words, placed the letter on the cushion upon which I rested my feet, and passed out.

"'What is to be done?' I asked Gertrude.

"'The advice I should take the liberty of offering, mademoiselle, would be to open this letter. It may warn us against some peril, and we may be the better prepared to escape it.'

"The advice was reasonable; I abandoned my first intention, and opened the letter."

At this point Diane paused, rose up, opened a little piece of furniture to which we still give its Italian name of *stippo*, and took a letter from a portfolio.

Bussy looked hastily at the address.

"To the beautiful Diane de Méridor," he read.

Then, looking at the young woman:

"This address," said he, "is in the Duc d'Anjou's hand."

"Ah!" she answered, with a sigh, "then he did not deceive me."

As Bussy was hesitating about opening the letter:

"Read," said she; "chance has connected you with the most particular events of my life, and I can no longer keep anything secret from you."

Bussy obeyed and read:

"An unhappy prince, stricken to the heart by your divine beauty, will visit you to-night at ten to excuse himself for his conduct in your regard, conduct which he well knows can have no other excuse except the invincible love he feels for you.

"François."

"So this letter was undoubtedly written by the Duc d'Anjou?" asked Diane.

"Alas! yes," answered Bussy, "it is his hand and seal."

Diane sighed.

"What if he were less guilty than I believed?" she murmured.

"Who, the prince?" inquired Bussy.

"No, the Comte de Monsoreau."

It was now Bussy's turn to sigh.

"Continue, madame," said he, "and then we can form a judgment of the prince and the count."

"This letter, which I had no reason at the time for believing not genuine, since it tallied so well with my apprehensions, proved, as Gertrude had foreseen, the dangers to which I was exposed, and rendered all the more precious the intervention of the unknown friend who offered his aid in my father's name. My sole trust was, therefore, now in him.

"We watched at the window more eagerly than ever. Gertrude and I hardly ever took our eye away from the pond and the part of the forest opposite our apartments. But, as far as our vision could reach, we saw nothing that was likely to befriend or aid our hopes.

"Night came at last; however, we were in January, when night comes early, and four or five hours still separated us from the decisive moment; we waited it anxiously.

"It was one of those beautiful, frosty nights during which, were it not for the cold, you would believe it was the end of spring or the beginning of autumn; the sky gleamed with thousands of stars, and the crescent moon lit up the landscape with her silvery beams; we opened the window in Gertrude's room, knowing that it was likely to be less carefully watched than mine.

"About seven, a slight mist arose from the pond; but this

mist resembled a veil of transparent gauze, and did not hinder us from seeing, or rather our eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness and were able to pierce the mist.

"As we had no way of measuring the time, we could not well tell the hour. At last, we thought we saw through this transparent obscurity shadows moving among the trees on the outskirts of the wood. These shadows seemed to be advancing cautiously, keeping under the trees, as if they felt safest where the darkness was thickest. We might, perhaps, have come to the conclusion that these shadows were but illusions created by our wearied eyes, when the neighing of a horse came to our ears.

"'They are our friends,' murmured Gertrude.

"'Or the prince,' I answered.

"'Oh, the prince,' said she, 'the prince would not hide.'

"This simple reflection banished my suspicions and reassured us.

"We now fixed all our thoughts on the scene before us.

"A man came forward; he was alone, having, as far as I could see, separated from a group of men sheltered under a clump of trees. He walked straight to the boat, unmoored it, and, getting in, rowed silently toward us.

"The nearer he was to us, the greater were my efforts to pierce the obscurity.

"From the first, there was something about the man that led me to think of the tall figure, the gloomy countenance, and the strongly marked features of the Comte de Monsoreau; when he was within ten paces of us doubt was no longer possible.

"I had now almost as much dread of my rescuer as of my persecutor.

"I stood mute and still, in a corner of the window, so that he might not see me. When he reached the foot of the wall, he fastened the boat to a ring and rose until his head was on a level with the casement.

"I could not restrain a slight cry.

"'Ah, forgive me!' said the Comte de Monsoreau, 'but I thought you were expecting me.'

"'I was expecting some one, monsieur,' said I, 'but I did not know the person I expected would be you.'

"A bitter smile passed over the count's face.

"'Who, pray, except myself and your father, watches over the honor of Diane de Méridor?'

"'You told me, monsieur, in the letter you wrote me, that you came in the name of my father.'

"'Yes, mademoiselle, and as I foresaw you were likely to have doubts about the mission I received, here is a letter from the baron.'

"And the count presented me a paper.

"We had not lit the candles, so that we might observe what was likely to occur beyond the walls with more security. I passed from Gertrude's room into mine, and, kneeling in front of the fire, I read these words by the light of the flame:

"'My dear Diane, the Comte de Monsoreau alone can rescue you from the danger you run, and this danger is immense. Trust him, then, entirely as the best friend Heaven could send you.

"'Later on, I will tell you what I desire from the very depths of my heart you should do to discharge the debt we shall contract toward him.

"'Your father, who entreats you to believe him and have pity on yourself and on him,

"'Baron de Méridor.'

"I had no positive basis for my dislike of M. de Monsoreau; the repugnance I felt for him sprang from instinct rather than reason. I might reproach him with the killing of a doe, but that was a very small crime, for a hunter.

"I went to him, then.

"'Well?' he asked.

"'Monsieur, I have read my father's letter; he tells me you are ready to get me out of this place; but he does not say where you are to lead me.'

"'I will bring you to the place where the baron is, mademoiselle.'

"'But where is he?'

"'In the Castle of Méridor.'

"'Then I shall see my father?'

"'In two hours.'

"'Oh, monsieur, if you are speaking the truth'—

"I paused; the count was evidently waiting for the end of the sentence.

"'You may rely on my entire gratitude,' I added, in a weak and trembling voice, for I guessed what it was he expected from that gratitude which I had not strength enough to express.

"'Then, mademoiselle,' said the count, 'you are ready to follow me?'

"I looked anxiously at Gertrude; it was easy seeing the count's gloomy face inspired her with as little confidence as it did me.

"'Reflect!' said he; 'every one of the minutes that are flying has a value for you beyond anything you can imagine. I am half an hour late, nearly. It will soon be ten, and were you not warned that at ten the prince will be in the Castle of Beaugé?'

"'Alas! yes,' I answered.

"'The prince once here, I can do nothing for you, except risk my life uselessly; I am risking it now, but it is with the certainty of saving you.'

"'Why has not my father come?'

"'Do you think your father is not watched? Do you think he can take a step without it being known where he is going?'

"'But you?' I asked.

"'With me it is a different thing; I am the prince's friend and confidant.'

"'But, monsieur,' I exclaimed, 'if you are the prince's friend and confidant, then'—

"'Then I betray him for your sake; yes, that is the meaning of it. Did I not say just now that I risked my life to save your honor?'

"There was such a tone of sincerity in the count's answer, and it harmonized so visibly with the truth, that, though my unwillingness to trust him was not entirely banished, I did not know how to express it.

"'I am waiting,' said the count.

"I turned to Gertrude, who was as undecided as I was.

"'See,' said M. de Monsoreau; 'if you are still in doubt, look yonder.'

"And from the direction opposite that by which he had come, he showed me a troop of horsemen advancing to the castle, on the other side of the pond.

"'Who are those men?' I asked.

"'The Duc d'Anjou and his suite,' answered the count.

"'Mademoiselle, mademoiselle,' cried Gertrude, 'there's no time to be lost.'

"'There has been too much lost already,' said the count; 'in Heaven's name, decide at once.'

"I fell on a chair; my strength failed me.

"'O God! O God! what ought I to do?' I murmured.

"'Listen,' said the count; 'listen, they are knocking at the gate.'

"And, in fact, we heard a loud knocking made by two men, who, as we had seen, had separated from the others for this purpose.

"'In five minutes,' said the count, 'there will be no longer time.'

"I tried to rise; my limbs gave way under me.

"'Help! Gertrude, help!' I stammered.

"'Mademoiselle,' said the poor girl, 'do you not hear the door opening? Do you not hear the tramping of the horses in the courtyard?'

"'Yes, yes,' I answered, making an effort, 'but all my strength is gone.'

"'Oh, is it only that?' said she, and she took me in her arms, lifted me as if I had been a child, and placed me in the arms of the count.

"As soon as I felt the touch of this man, I shuddered so violently that I was near escaping from him and falling into the lake.

"But he held me close to his breast, and laid me down in the boat.

"Gertrude followed me and entered the boat, unaided.

"Then I noticed that my veil had been unfastened, and was floating on the water.

"The idea occurred to me that it might enable our enemies to trace us.

"'My veil, my veil!' said I to the count; 'try to recover my veil.'

"The count glanced at the object I pointed out.

"'No,' said he, 'better leave it as it is.'

"And, seizing the oars, he gave such a violent impetus to the boat that, after a few strokes, we were almost at the edge of the pond.

"At that moment we perceived that the windows of my room were illuminated, and servants were hurrying into it with lights.

"'Have I deceived you?' said M. de Monsoreau; 'and were we not just in time?'

"'Oh, yes, yes, monsieur,' I answered, 'you are, in very truth, my savior.'

"Meanwhile the lights seemed to be scurrying about in a very agitated fashion, moving, now into Gertrude's room, now into mine. Then there were cries; a man entered, before whom all the others fell back. He approached the open window, leaned outside, perceived the veil floating on the water, and uttered a cry.

"'You see now I have acted wisely in leaving the veil where it was. The prince will believe that you threw yourself into the lake to escape him, and, while he is searching for you, we will escape.'

"It was then the first time I really trembled in presence of a mind so crafty and subtle — a mind that had wrought out such a plan beforehand.

"At this moment we landed."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TREATY.

There was again a moment's silence. Diane, almost as moved by the recollection of these events as she had been by the reality, felt her voice failing. Bussy was listening with all the energies of his soul and was already vowing vengeance on her enemies, whoever they might be.

At length, after inhaling the contents of a little vial which she took from her pocket, Diane was able to continue:

"We had hardly landed when seven or eight men ran up to us. They were the count's people, and I thought I recognized among them the two servants who escorted our litter when we had been attacked by the persons who led me to the Castle of Beaugé. A groom held two horses: one, the black charger of M. de Monsoreau; the other, a white nag intended for myself. The count helped me to mount and then jumped on his own horse as soon as I was in the saddle.

"Gertrude was taken up behind one of the count's men, and when all these arrangements were made we dashed into a gallop.

"I noticed that the count held the bridle of my horse, and I remarked that I was good enough horsewoman to be able to

dispense with his care; but he answered that she was skittish and might fly off in another direction, thus separating me from him.

"We had travelled about ten minutes when I heard Gertrude's voice calling to me. I turned round and saw that our troop had divided. Four men had taken a by-path and were hurrying her into the forest, while the count and four others followed the same road along with me.

"'Gertrude!' I cried. 'Monsieur, why is she not coming with us?'

"'It is an indispensable precaution,' said he. 'If we are pursued, we must leave two tracks behind us; it is absolutely necessary that those who may have perceived us should be able to say they saw two different women carried off in two different directions. It may then be our good fortune to have the Duc d'Anjou take the wrong road and run after the maid instead of her mistress.'

"The answer was specious, but not satisfactory. However, what could I say? what could I do? I sighed and waited.

"Moreover, the path taken by the count was the one which led to the Castle of Méridor; at the gait at which we were going we should be there in a quarter of an hour. But suddenly, at a cross-road well known to me, the count, instead of continuing on the road which would bring me to my father, swerved into a path on the left which clearly led elsewhere. I cried out at once, and, in spite of the rate at which we were galloping, I had my hand on the pommel ready to spring to the ground, when the count, who no doubt had his eye on all my movements, leaned over, seized me by the waist, lifted me up, and set me on his own horse in front of him. Once at liberty, my nag fled, neighing, into the forest.

"The action was executed so swiftly that I had barely time to utter a cry.

"The count placed his hand over my mouth.

"'Mademoiselle,' said he, 'I swear upon my honor that everything I do is by your father's orders, and I will prove it at our first stopping-place. If you do not regard the proof as sufficient, I pledge you my honor a second time that you shall be free.'

"'But, monsieur, you told me you were conducting me to my father,' I cried, thrusting his hand away and throwing my head back.

"'Yes, I told you so because I saw you hesitated to follow me, and a moment's further hesitation would have been fatal to both of us, as you saw for yourself. And now, think of our position,' said the count, halting. 'Do you want to kill the baron? Do you want to march to your own dishonor? Say but the word and I lead you back to Méridor.'

"'You said you had a proof you acted for my father?'

"'And here it is,' answered the count; 'take this letter and read it at the first place we stop at. If, after reading it, you wish to return to the castle, I again repeat that, upon my honor, you shall be free. But if you have any respect for the baron's orders, you will not return; of that I am very sure.'

"'Then, monsieur, let us gain the first stopping-place as soon as possible, for I am certainly in a hurry to find out if you speak the truth.'

"'Remember, you are coming with me freely.'

"'Yes, freely, or, rather, as freely as a young girl can act who sees on one side her father's death and her own dishonor, and on the other the necessity of trusting in the good faith of a man she hardly knows. No matter, I follow you freely, monsieur, as you shall have evidence of if you are kind enough to give me back my horse.'

"The count made a sign to one of his men to dismount. I leaped off his steed, and, a moment after, was riding beside him.

"'The nag cannot be far,' said he to the man who had dismounted; 'you know she comes like a dog when called by her name or whistled for. You will follow us to La Châtre.'

"I shuddered in spite of myself. La Châtre was ten leagues from Méridor and on the highroad to Paris.

"'Monsieur,' said I, 'I go with you, but at La Châtre we shall make our conditions.'

"'Or, rather, mademoiselle, at La Châtre you shall give your orders,' answered the count.

"This assumed deference did not reassure me. However, as I had no choice and as the course suggested by Monsoreau seemed the only one that would enable me to escape from the Duc d'Anjou, I continued my journey in silence. We reached La Châtre at daybreak. But instead of entering the village, we turned aside as soon as we came to the first gardens, crossed the fields, and rode toward a lonely house.

"I halted.

"'Where are we going?' I asked.

"'Listen, mademoiselle,' said the count. 'I have already remarked that your understanding is clear-sighted and judicious, and it is to your understanding I make my appeal. Can we, in flying from a prince next in power to the King, stop at an ordinary hostelry, in the midst of a village where the first peasant that sees us will denounce us? You might bribe a single man, but you cannot bribe a whole village.'

"Like all the answers of the count, this, too, had a conclusiveness, or a seeming conclusiveness, that struck me.

"'Be it so,' said I, 'let us go on.'

"And we started again.

"We were expected. A man had been sent in advance, without my knowledge, to provide suitable accommodations.

"A bright fire burned in the chimney of a room that was almost clean, and a bed was ready.

"'This is your apartment, mademoiselle,' said the count; 'I will await your orders.'

"He saluted, passed out, and left me alone.

"My first act was to approach the lamp and draw my father's letter from my bosom. Here it is, Monsieur de Bussy. I make you my judge; read."

Bussy took the letter and read:

"My beloved Diane, if, as I do not doubt, you have, in compliance with my entreaties, followed the Comte de Monsoreau, he must have told you that you have had the misfortune to attract the attention of the Duc d'Anjou, and that it was this prince who had you seized and conducted to the Castle of Beaugé. By this violence you can judge of what he is capable and of the shame that threatens you. There is one way of escaping this shame, which I would not survive: it is to marry our noble friend; once you are Comtesse de Monsoreau, it is his wife the count defends, and he has sworn to me to defend you by any and every means. My wish, then, my darling daughter, is that this marriage take place as soon as possible, and should you yield to my desire, I add a father's blessing to my formal consent, and pray God to bestow on you all the treasures of happiness which his love reserves for such hearts as yours.

"Your father, who does not command but entreats,

"Baron de Méridor."

"Alas! madame," said Bussy, "if this letter be indeed your father's it is only too positive."

"It is his — I have no doubt on that point; still, I read it three times before coming to any decision. Then I called the count.

"He entered at once, which proved he had been waiting at the door.

"I was holding the letter in my hand.

"'Well,' said he, 'have you read it?'

"'Yes,' I answered.

"'Do you still doubt of my discretion and respect?'

"'Though I did, monsieur,' I answered, 'this letter would force me to believe in them. And now, monsieur, there is something still. Supposing I am inclined to follow my father's advice, what do you intend doing?'

"'I intend leading you to Paris, mademoiselle; it is the place where you can be most easily concealed.'

"'And my father?'

"'You know well that, no matter where you are, the baron is sure to join you, as soon as he can do so without exposing you to peril.'

"'Well, then, monsieur, I am ready to accept your protection on the conditions which you impose.'

"'I impose nothing, mademoiselle,' replied the count, 'I simply offer you the means of saving yourself.'

"'Then I accept the correction, and say, almost in your own words, I am ready to accept the means of salvation you offer, but on three conditions.'

"'Speak, mademoiselle.'

"'The first is that Gertrude be restored to me.'

"'She is so already,' said the count.

"'The second is that we travel apart to Paris.'

"'I was about to propose it, to avoid offending your delicacy.'

"'And the third is that our marriage, unless I acknowledge some urgent necessity for it, shall not take place except in the presence of my father.'

"'It is my most earnest desire. I am sure his blessing on our union will be followed by that of Heaven.'

"I was bewildered. I had believed that, certainly, some one of my proposals, at least, would be found unacceptable, and, lo! they were all such as the count intended to make himself.

"'Now, mademoiselle,' said he, 'will you allow me, in my turn, to give you some advice?'

"'I will hear you, monsieur.'

"'Then I should counsel you to travel by night.'

"'I agree to that fully.'

"'And to permit me to select the route and the lodgings you will occupy; all my precautions will have but one object — to protect you from the Duc d'Anjou.'

"'If you love me as you say, monsieur, our interests are the same. I see no objection to complying with your request.'

"'My last counsel is for you to be satisfied with the home I select for you, however plain and retired.'

"'All I ask, monsieur, is to be concealed; so the plainer and the more remote the place is the better it will be suited to a fugitive.'

"'Then we are agreed on all points, mademoiselle, and all that remains, in accordance with the plans you have traced, is for me to present my very humble respects, send you your maid, and give my attention to the route you are to follow.'

"'And as for myself, monsieur,' I answered, 'I am a gentlewoman just as you are a gentleman; do you keep your promises and I will keep mine.'

"'That is all I ask,' said the count, 'and this assurance convinces me that I shall soon be the happiest of men.'

"And with these words he bowed and passed out.

"Five minutes after, Gertrude entered.

"The joy of this good girl was great; she had believed she was separated from me forever. I told her all that had passed; I needed some one who could enter into my views, second my wishes, understand a hint at the proper moment, and obey a sign or a gesture. The complacent behavior of M. de Monsoreau astonished me, and I feared there might be some infraction of the treaty we had just made.

"As I was coming to the end of my story, we heard the sound of a horse's hoofs. I ran to the window; it was the count galloping back the way we had come. Why did he go back instead of going forward? It was a thing I could not understand. But he had fulfilled the first article of the treaty by restoring Gertrude to me, and he was now observing the second by retiring; I had nothing to complain of. Besides, in whatever direction he went, his absence reassured me.

"We spent all the day in this little house, waited on by our landlady. It was not until evening that the man whom I re-

garded as the leader of our escort entered my room and asked me for orders.

"As the nearer I was to Beaugé, the greater, in my opinion, was the danger, I told him I was ready. Five minutes later he returned and informed me, as he bowed, that all preparations were made. I found my white nag at the door; she had come at the first call, as the Comte de Monsoreau had predicted.

"We travelled the whole night, and stopped at daybreak, as on the evening before. I reckoned that we must have made nearly fifteen leagues. However, M. de Monsoreau had seen to it that I should not suffer from cold or weariness; the mare of his choice trotted in a peculiarly gentle fashion, and, when I left the house, a fur mantle was thrown over my shoulders.

"This halt resembled the first, and all these night journeys were similar to the one we had just made. I was treated on every occasion with the same respect, the same deference, the same attention; it was evident some one preceded us to prepare our lodgings; whether it was the count or not, I could not say, for I never saw him once during our travels; he was plainly determined to obey this article of our treaty as exactly as the other two.

"On the evening of the seventh day I perceived an immense crowd of houses. It was Paris.

"We stopped till nightfall; then we resumed our journey.

"We soon passed under a gate, beyond which the first object that struck me was an immense building, which I knew from its walls to be a monastery; next, we crossed the river at two points, turned to the right, and, after a ten minutes' ride, were in the Place de la Bastille. There, a man, who seemed to be expecting us, came out of a doorway and approached the leader of our escort.

"'This is the place,' said he.

"The leader of the escort turned to me, saying:

"'You hear, madame; we have arrived.'

"Then he leaped from his horse and assisted me in alighting, as had been his custom at every stopping-place.

"The door was open and the staircase was lighted by a lamp placed on one of the steps.

"'Madame,' said the leader of the escort, 'you are now at home. The mission I received to wait upon you ends here; may I hope to be able to say that this mission has been accom-

plished according to your wishes and with all the respect which we were ordered to show toward you ?"

"'Yes, monsieur,' said I, 'I have nothing but thanks to give you. Offer them also to the other brave men who have accompanied me. I should like to remunerate them in a different fashion ; but I possess nothing.'

"'Do not be uneasy, madame, as to that,' he answered, 'they have been rewarded liberally.'

"After saluting me, he jumped on horseback again, and turning to his men :

"'We depart now,' said he, 'and to-morrow let not one of you remember that you saw this door.'

"After these words, the little troop rode away and was soon lost in the Rue Saint-Antoine.

"Gertrude's first task was to shut the door, and it was through the wicket that we saw them leave.

"We went upstairs and found ourselves in a corridor upon which three doors opened.

"We entered the one in the centre ; it led into the drawing-room in which we are now sitting and which was then lighted exactly as at present.

"I went into the room yonder, and found it was a large dressing-room, then that other one, which was to be my bed-chamber, and to my great surprise, I stood in front of my own portrait.

"It was the one that hung in my father's room at Méridor ; the count had no doubt asked it of the baron and obtained it.

"I shuddered at this fresh proof that my father already looked upon me as the wife of M. de Monsoreau.

"We examined all the apartments ; they were lonely, but lacked nothing ; there were fires in all the chimneys, and in the dining-room a table was already laid out. After a hasty glance, I saw with satisfaction that there was but a single knife and fork on the table.

"'Well, mademoiselle,' said Gertrude, 'you see the count keeps his promise to the end.'

"'Alas ! yes,' I answered, with a sigh. 'I should have better liked if, by failing in some of his promises, he released me from mine.'

"'I sat down to supper ; afterward we went through the whole house a second time, but did not meet a living soul then, either ; it was entirely our own, we were by ourselves

"Gertrude slept in my room.

"Next day she set out to examine the neighborhood. It was then only that I learned from her we were living at the end of the Rue Saint-Antoine, opposite the Hôtel des Tournelles, and that the fortress on our right was the Bastile.

"The information, for that matter, did not tell me much. I knew nothing of Paris, never having been there before.

"The day slipped by without anything new occurring; in the evening, as I was sitting down to supper, there was a knock at the door.

"Gertrude and I looked at each other.

"There was a second knock.

"'Go and see who it is,' I said.

"'If it be the count?' she asked, seeing me turn pale.

"'If it is the count,' I answered, making an effort to control myself, 'open, Gertrude; he has kept his promises faithfully; he shall see that I keep mine."

"A moment after Gertrude reappeared.

"'It is M. le Comte, madame,' said she.

"'Show him in,' I answered.

"Gertrude withdrew and the count stood on the threshold.

"'Well, madame,' he asked, 'have I faithfully fulfilled the treaty?'

"'Yes, monsieur,' I replied, 'and I thank you.'

"'You are graciously pleased to receive me, then,' he added, with a smile, the irony of which he did not succeed in hiding.

"'Enter, monsieur.'

"He came in and remained standing. I made him a sign to be seated.

"'Have you any news, monsieur?' I asked.

"'News of where and of whom, madame?'

"'Of Méridor, and of my father especially.'

"'I did not return to Méridor and have not seen the baron.'

"'Then of Beaugé and the Duc d'Anjou?'

"'That is different. I have been to Beaugé and I have spoken with the duke.'

"'In what state of mind is he?'

"'He is trying to doubt.'

"'What?'

"'Your death.'

"'But you confirmed it."

"'I did all I could.'

"'And where is the duke?'

"'He returned to Paris yesterday evening.'

"'Why did he return so quickly?'

"'Because a man can hardly be expected to feel cheerful in a place where he believes he is responsible for a woman's death.'

"'Did you see him since his return?'

"'I have just left him.'

"'Did he speak of me?'

"'I did not give him time.'

"'Of what, then, did you speak?'

"'Of a promise he once made me which I urged him to execute.'

"'What was it?'

"'He pledged himself, because of certain services I rendered him, to secure me the post of grand huntsman.'

"'Ah! yes,' I said, with a melancholy smile, as I recalled poor Daphne's death, 'you are a terrible hunter, I remember, and as such you have a right to the place.'

"'It is not because I am a hunter that I shall obtain it, it is because I am the prince's servant; it is not because of any right I have to it that I shall be successful, it is because the Duc d'Anjou dare not prove ungrateful to me.'

"In all those answers, despite their respectful tones, there was something that frightened me; it was that I saw in them the expression of a sombre and implacable will.

"For an instant I was dumb.

"'May I write to my father?' I asked.

"'Of course; but your letters may be intercepted.'

"'Am I forbidden to go out?'

"'You are not forbidden to do anything, madame; but allow me to observe that you might be followed.'

"'But, at least, I must hear Mass on Sundays?'

"'It would be better, I fancy, for your safety if you did not hear it; but, should you be determined on the point, I should recommend you — mind, it is a simple advice I am tendering you — to hear it at the church of Sainte-Catherine."

"'And where is this church?'

"'Opposite your house, on the other side of the street.'

"'Thanks, monsieur.'

"There was silence again.

"'When shall I see you, monsieur?'

"'When you permit me to return.'

"'Is my permission needed?'

"'Undoubtedly. Until now I have been a stranger to you.'

"'Have you not a key for the house?'

"'Only your husband is entitled to have one.'

"'Monsieur,' I answered, more dismayed by these strangely submissive replies than I should have been if they had been authoritative in tone, 'monsieur, be good enough to return whenever you wish, or when you have anything important to communicate.'

"'Thanks, madame, I will use your permission, but not abuse it — and the first proof of this I offer is to tender you my respects and take my leave.'

"Thereupon the count rose.

"'You are going, then?' I asked, growing more and more astonished at a way of acting which I had been so far from expecting.

"'Madame,' answered the count, 'I know you do not love me, and I will not take advantage of a situation which forces you to receive my attentions. Seeing me only at intervals, you will, I hope, get gradually accustomed to my presence. In this way the sacrifice will cost you less when the moment arrives for you to become my wife.'

"'Monsieur,' said I, rising in turn, 'I acknowledge the delicacy with which you have acted, and, in spite of a certain harshness in your language by which it is accompanied, I appreciate it. You are right, and I will speak with a frankness similar to your own; I had certain prejudices in your regard which, I hope, time will cure.'

"'Permit me, madame,' said the count, 'to share that hope and to live in expectation of that happy moment.'

"Then, saluting with all the reverence I could meet with from the humblest of my servants, he made a sign to Gertrude, who was present at the whole conversation, to light him out, and retired."

CHAPTER XV.

THE MARRIAGE.

"Upon my soul, a strange man that!" said Bussy.

"Oh, yes, very strange indeed, is he not, monsieur? His manner of expressing his love had something of the bitterness with which he might have expressed his hatred. When Gertrude returned she found me sadder and more frightened than ever.

"She tried to cheer me, but it was evident the poor girl was as uneasy as I was myself. This icy respect, this ironical submission, this repressed passion, which vibrated harshly in every one of his words, was more alarming than would have been a plainly expressed resolution, which I might have found means to resist.

"The next day was Sunday; during all my life I had never failed to be present at divine service. I heard the bell of Sainte-Catherine's Church, and it seemed to be calling me. I saw every one making their way to the house of God. Wrapping a thick veil about me and followed by Gertrude, I mingled with the crowd.

"I sought out the darkest corner in the church and knelt against the wall. Gertrude knelt at my side, as if to shield me from the world. This time her guardianship was needless; no one seemed to pay any attention to us.

"Two days afterward, the count returned with the information that he had been appointed grand huntsman; the Duc d'Anjou's influence had procured him a post that had been almost pledged to one of the King's favorites named Saint-Luc. It was a triumph he hardly expected himself."

"And indeed," said Bussy, "we were all astonished."

"He came to announce the news to me in hopes that his new dignity would hasten my consent; but he was neither urgent nor importunate; he expected everything from my promise and from events.

"As for myself, I was beginning to hope that as the Duc d'Anjou believed me dead, there was no longer any danger, and I might find some way of being released from my engagement.

"Seven more days went by, marked by nothing except two visits of the count. Like the preceding visits, they were

cold and respectful. But I have already explained to you the strange, almost menacing character of this coldness and respect.

"The following Sunday I went to church, as I had done before, and occupied the same corner I occupied a week previously. A sense of security often leads to imprudence; in the middle of my prayers I unconsciously put my veil aside. In the house of God I thought only of God — I was praying ardently for my father, when suddenly Gertrude touched my arm. But I was in a state of religious ecstasy, and it was only when she touched me the second time that I raised my head and looked mechanically around me. And then my eyes met those of the Duc d'Anjou, who was staring at me intently.

"A man who appeared to be his confidant rather than his servant stood near him."

"It was Aurilly," said Bussy, "his lute-player."

"Yes," answered Diane; "I think that is the name Gertrude mentioned afterward."

"Continue, madame," said Bussy, "pray continue. I am beginning to understand everything."

"I drew my veil quickly over my face; it was too late — he had seen me, and even if he had not recognized me, my resemblance at least to the woman he had loved and, as he believed, lost, moved him deeply. Troubled by his gaze, which I felt instinctively was riveted on me, I rose and proceeded to the door, but he was there; he dipped his fingers in the font and offered me holy-water as I passed.

"I pretended not to see him and went out without accepting his offer.

"But although I walked straight before me, I knew we were followed. Had I known Paris, I should have tried to deceive the duke as to my real abode, but I had never been in any street except the one leading from the house to the church; I was not acquainted with any one from whom I might ask a quarter of an hour's hospitality; I had not one friend, and my only protector was a greater object of fear to me than would have been an enemy. Such was my position."

"Great heaven!" murmured Bussy, "why did not Providence or chance throw me in your way sooner?"

Diane thanked the young man with a look.

"But excuse me," he continued, "I am always interrupting

you, and yet I am dying of curiosity. Continue, I beseech you."

"M. de Monsoreau came the same evening. I did not know if I should tell him of my adventure. But he made any hesitation on my part unnecessary.

"'You asked me,' said he, 'if you were forbidden to go to Mass, and I answered that you had supreme control over your own actions, and would act wisely in not stirring from the house. You would not believe me; you went this morning to divine service at the church of Sainte-Catherine; some chance, or rather some fatality, led the prince thither, and he has seen you.'

"'It is true, monsieur, and I hesitated to mention the matter to you, for I did not know if the prince recognized me to be the person I am, or if my appearance had simply surprised him.'

"'Your face struck him; your resemblance to the woman he regrets appears to him extraordinary; he followed you and made inquiries, but no one has been able to tell him anything, because no one knows anything.'

"'Oh, heavens! monsieur,' I cried.

"'The duke has a dark and persevering soul,' said M. de Monsoreau.

"'Oh, I hope he will forget me!'

"'I do not believe it. I have done all I could to get him to forget you, and I have not succeeded.'

"And the first gleam of passion I noticed in M. de Monsoreau flashed from his eyes at that moment. I was more terrified by this flame, blazing out from a fire I thought had burned itself out, than I had been in the morning at the sight of the prince.

"I was silent.

"'What do you intend doing?' asked the count.

"'Could I not change from this house and street, live at the other end of Paris, or, better still, return to Anjou?'

"'It would be useless,' said M. de Monsoreau, shaking his head; 'the Duc d'Anjou is a terrible bloodhound; he is on your track, and, go where you will, he is now sure to come up with you.'

"'Gracious heaven! How you frighten me!'

"'I do not wish to do so; I simply tell you how matters are, and nothing else.'

"'Then it is my turn to ask you the question you have just put to me. What do you intend doing, monsieur?'

"'Alas,' retorted the count, with bitter irony, 'I am not gifted with a fine imagination. I found a way, but as that way did not please you, I give it up; but do not ask me to form new plans.'

"'But perhaps, after all, the danger is not as pressing as you suppose,' I urged.

"'That you can only learn from the future, madame,' said he, rising. 'In any case I can but add that Madame de Monsoreau would be in less peril from the prince from the fact that as my new office brings me into the closest relations with the King, my wife and I would naturally be protected by the King.'

"A sigh was my only answer. Everything said by the count was full of reason and probability.

"M. de Monsoreau waited a moment, as if to give me plenty of time to reply, but I had not strength enough. He was standing, ready to retire. A bitter smile flitted over his lips; he bowed and passed out.

"I thought I heard him swearing as he was going downstairs.

"I summoned Gertrude.

"Gertrude usually stayed in the drawing-room or bedchamber when the count was present; she ran in.

"I was at the window, and had wrapped the curtains about me in such a way that, without being perceived, I could see whatever was going on in the street.

"The count left the house and soon disappeared.

"We remained there nearly an hour, watching eagerly; but no one came by, and the night passed without anything unusual occurring.

"The next day Gertrude was accosted by a young man whom she recognized as the person who was with the prince the evening before. But she refused to respond to his flatteries or answer his questions.

"The young man got tired at last, and went away.

"This meeting alarmed me exceedingly; it was but the beginning of an inquiry that would certainly not stop there. I was afraid M. de Monsoreau would not come in the evening, and that some attack might be made on me during the night. I sent for him; he came immediately.

"I related everything and described the young man as well as I could from the data furnished by Gertrude.

"'It was Aurilly,' said he; 'what answer did Gertrude make him?'

"'She made none.'

"M. de Monsoreau reflected a moment.

"'She was wrong,' said he.

"'Why?'

"'She might have helped us to gain time.'

"'Time?'

"'To-day I am still dependent on the Duc d'Anjou; but in a fortnight, in twelve days, in a week, perhaps, the Duc d'Anjou will be dependent on me. We must deceive him to gain time.'

"'Great heavens!'

"'Undoubtedly hope will render him patient. A complete refusal would drive him to extremities.'

"'Monsieur, write to my father,' I cried. 'My father will come here at once and throw himself at the feet of the King. The King will have pity on an old man.'

"'That will entirely depend on the disposition of the King at the time; it will depend on whether it is his policy at the moment to be the friend or the enemy of the Duc d'Anjou. Besides, it would take a messenger six days to find your father, and it would take your father six days to come here. In twelve days the Duc d'Anjou could make all the way he wants, if we do not stop him.'

"'But how can we stop him?'

"M. de Monsoreau did not answer. I understood his meaning and lowered my eyes.

"'Monsieur,' said I, 'give your orders to Gertrude and she will obey them.'

"An imperceptible smile passed over M. de Monsoreau's lips at this my first appeal to his protection.

"He talked for some moments with Gertrude.

"'Madame,' said he, 'I might be seen if I left; it will be night in two or three hours; will you permit me to pass these two or three hours in your apartments?'

"M. de Monsoreau had almost the right to command; he was satisfied to request. I made him a sign to be seated.

"It was then I noticed the count's perfect self-control; that very moment, even, he got the better of the embarrassment that

resulted from our respective positions, and his conversation, which the harshness I have already spoken of affected powerfully, became novel and attractive. The count had thought much and had travelled extensively, and before two hours had passed, I understood clearly the influence this singular man had acquired over my father."

Bussy heaved a sigh.

"At nightfall, evidently satisfied with the progress he had made, and without trying to advance farther, he rose and took his leave.

"Then Gertrude and I took our places at the window and watched. This time we distinctly saw two men examining the house. We went to the door several times. As we had put out all the lights, we could not be seen.

"We retired about eleven.

"The next day Gertrude, after leaving the house, found the same young man in the same place; he approached her and asked the same questions he had asked on the previous evening. She was less reserved than usual and exchanged a few words with him.

"On the following day, Gertrude was even still more communicative. She told him I was the widow of a counsellor, that I was without fortune, and lived very retired; he wished for further information, but was assured he must be satisfied with what he had obtained for the present.

"On the day after this, Aurilly seemed to have entertained some doubts as to the truth of the story he had heard. He spoke of Anjou, Beaugé, even mentioned Méridor.

"Gertrude replied that all these names were utterly unknown to her.

"Then he confessed he belonged to the Duc d'Anjou, and that the prince had seen me and fallen in love with me, and, after this confession, magnificent offers were made to her and to me; to her, if she should introduce the prince into the house; to me, if I would receive him.

"M. de Monsoreau came every evening, and I at once told him what had occurred. He remained with us from eight in the evening until midnight; but it was evident that his anxiety was great.

"On Saturday evening he was paler and more agitated than usual.

"'Listen,' said he, 'you must promise to receive the prince on Tuesday or Wednesday.'

"'And why?'

"'Because he is at this moment capable of anything; he is now on good terms with the King, and, consequently, we can hope for nothing from the King.'

"'But between now and Wednesday something may happen to help us.'

"'Perhaps. I am in daily expectation of a certain event that must place the prince in my power. To bring it about, to hasten its advent, I spare neither toil nor trouble. I have to leave you to-morrow. I am obliged to go to Monsoreau.'

"'Is it necessary?' I asked, at once frightened and pleased.

"'Yes. I have an appointment there upon which it absolutely depends whether the event of which I have spoken shall come to pass or not.'

"'But if the situation remain the same, what are we to do then?'

"'What can I do against a prince's power, madame, when I have no right to protect you? We must submit to ill-fortune.'

"'Oh, father! father!' I cried.

"The count fixed his eyes on me.

"'Oh, monsieur! what shall I do?'

"'Have you anything to reproach me with?'

"'Nothing; quite the contrary.'

"'Have I not been as devoted as a friend, as respectful as a brother?'

"'You have behaved as a gentleman, in every respect.'

"'Did I not have your promise?'

"'Yes.'

"'Have I once reminded you of it?'

"'No.'

"'And yet, when the circumstances are such that you find yourself placed between an honorable position and a shameful one, you prefer to be the Duc d'Anjou's mistress rather than be the Comte de Monsoreau's wife.'

"'I have not said so, monsieur.'

"'Then decide.'

"'I have decided.'

"'To be the Comtesse de Monsoreau?'

"'Rather than the mistress of the Duc d'Anjou.'

"'Rather than the mistress of the Duc d'Anjou. The alternative is flattering.'

"I was silent.

"'No matter. Let Gertrude gain time until Tuesday — you understand? and on Tuesday we'll see what happens.'

"Gertrude went out as usual the next day, but did not meet Aurilly. When she returned, we began to feel uneasier at his absence than we should have been at his presence. Gertrude left the house a second time, not that there was any necessity for it, but solely in the hope of seeing him; however, he did not appear. A third trip turned out as useless as the two others.

"I then sent Gertrude to M. de Monsoreau's lodgings; he was gone, and no one knew where he was.

"We were alone and isolated; we were conscious of our weakness, and, for the first time, I felt I had been unjust to the count."

"Oh, madame," cried Bussy, "do not be in any hurry to trust this man; there is something throughout his entire conduct which we do not know, but which we will know."

"Night came on, and with it increasing terror; I was prepared for anything rather than fall alive into the Duc d'Anjou's power. I had managed to get a poniard, and was determined to stab myself before the prince's eyes the very moment he or his people attempted to lay hands on me. We barricaded ourselves in our rooms, for, through some incredible neglect, the street door had no bolt on the inside. We concealed the lamp and took our post at our usual observatory.

"All was quiet until eleven; at that hour five men issued forth from the Rue Saint-Antoine, appeared to deliberate for a time, and then hid in an angle of the Hôtel des Tournelles.

"We began to tremble; these men were probably there on our account.

"However, they kept perfectly still. Thus passed nearly a quarter of an hour.

"Then we saw two other men at the corner of the Rue Saint-Paul. Gertrude was enabled by the light of the moon, which, for a moment, emerged from the clouds, to recognize one of these two men as Aurilly.

"'Alas! mademoiselle, there are two of them,' murmured the poor girl.

"'Yes,' I answered, shivering with terror, 'and there are five others yonder ready to aid them.'

"'But they will have to break open the door,' said Gertrude, 'and at the noise the neighbors will run hither.'

"'What reason have you for thinking the neighbors will help us? What do they know about us? Is it likely, then, they will expose themselves to danger for the sake of defending us? Alas, Gertrude! our only real defender is the count.'

"'Then why do you persist in refusing to be his countess?'

"I heaved a sigh.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MARRIAGE — (*Continued*).

"During this time the two men at the corner of the Rue Saint-Paul had glided along the houses and were now under our windows.

"We opened the casement softly.

"'Are you sure this is it?' asked a voice.

"'Yes, monseigneur, perfectly sure. It is the fifth house from the corner of the Rue Saint-Paul.'

"'And do you think the key will fit?'

"'I took an impression of the lock.'

"I seized Gertrude's arm violently.

"'And once inside?'

"'Once inside, the thing is settled; the maid will let us in. Your Highness has a golden key in your pocket which is quite as good as this.'

"'Then open.'

"The next thing we heard was the key turning in the lock. But, all of a sudden, the men in ambush at the corner of the hotel came out from the wall and rushed on the prince and Aurilly, crying: 'Death! Death!'

"It was all a mystery to me; but one thing I understood in a dim sort of way: it was that we were being succored in some unexpected, incredible manner. I fell on my knees and poured out my thanks to Heaven.

"However, as soon as the prince showed himself, as soon as he told who he was, every voice was hushed, every sword was sheathed, every aggressor took a step backward."

"Yes," said Bussy, "it was not at the prince they aimed, it was at me."

"In any case," answered Diane, "this attack led to the departure of the prince. We saw him going away by the Rue de Jouy, while the five gentlemen returned to their hiding-place at the corner of the Hôtel des Tournelles.

"It was evident that, for this night at least, we were free from danger, for, clearly, these five gentlemen had no quarrel with me. But we were so restless and excited that we gave up all thought of going to bed; we remained at the window, on the watch for some unusual incident which we instinctively felt was at hand.

"We had not long to wait. A man appeared on horseback in the Rue Saint-Antoine, keeping the middle of the street. It was undoubtedly the person the five gentlemen were waylaying, for, as soon as they saw him, they shouted: '*To arms! To arms!*' and fell upon him.

"You know all about this gentleman," said Diane, "because this gentleman was yourself."

"On the contrary, madame," answered Bussy, who was hoping that the young woman would reveal some of the secrets of her heart during her narrative, "on the contrary, I know nothing except the fight, since, after it was over, I fainted."

"It is needless to tell you of the interest we took in this unequal struggle, so valiantly sustained," continued Diane, with a slight blush. "Every incident in the combat drew from us a shudder, a cry, a prayer. We witnessed your horse sink to the ground. We thought you were lost; but our fears were useless; the brave Bussy proved that he deserved his reputation. You fell on your feet and did not need to rise in order to strike your enemies. At length, surrounded and threatened on every side, you retreated like a lion, facing your foes, and rested against the door. Then the same thought occurred to Gertrude and me: it was to go down and let you in. She looked at me. 'Yes,' was my answer, and we both hurried to the staircase. But, as I have told you, we had barricaded ourselves in our room, and it took us some seconds to remove the furniture obstructing our passage, and, just as we came to the landing, we heard the street door closing.

"We remained quite still. Who was the person that had entered, and how had he got in?

"I leaned for support on Gertrude; we spoke not a word, but waited.

"Soon we heard steps in the alley; then they drew near the stairs, and a man appeared, who tottered, threw up his arms, and fell, with a hollow groan, on the first step of the staircase.

"It was evident this man was not followed, that he had placed the door, which had so fortunately been left open by the Duc d'Anjou, between himself and his enemies, and that, though dangerously, perhaps mortally wounded, he had fallen down at the foot of the stairs.

"In any case we had nothing to fear, while, on the other hand, this man had urgent need of our help.

"'The lamp!' I said to Gertrude. She ran out and returned with the light.

"We were not mistaken; you had swooned. We recognized you as the brave gentleman who had so valiantly defended himself; and we decided, without any hesitation, to aid you.

"In a moment you were borne into my room and laid on the bed.

"You remained unconscious; evidently a surgeon was needed. Gertrude remembered having heard of a marvellous cure effected some days before by a young doctor in the Rue — Rue Beautrellis. She knew his address, and offered to go for him.

"'But,' said I, 'this young man may betray us.'

"'Do not be alarmed,' she answered, 'I 'll see to that.'

"She is at once a courageous and prudent girl," continued Diane; "so I trusted her entirely. She took some money, a key, and my poniard, and I was alone by your side, — praying for you."

"Alas, madame," said Bussy, "I was unconscious of my happiness."

"A quarter of an hour later, Gertrude returned with the young doctor; he had consented to everything, and followed her with his eyes bandaged.

"I stayed in the drawing-room while he was being conducted into the chamber. There he was allowed to remove the bandage from his eyes."

"Yes," said Bussy, "it was just then I came to myself; my eyes opened on your portrait, and I think I saw you entering."

"You are right: I entered; my anxiety got the better of my prudence; I exchanged a few questions with the young doctor; he examined your wound, answered for your recovery, and I felt relieved."

"All that remained in my mind," said Bussy, "but it was like the recollection of a dream; and yet something told me here," added the young man, laying his hand on his heart, "that I had not dreamed."

"When the surgeon had dressed your wound, he drew a little flask from his pocket; it contained a red liquid, and he let a few drops fall on your lips. It was, he told me, an elixir which would send you to sleep and counteract the fever.

"And in fact, the instant after you swallowed the drops, you closed your eyes again and fell back into the same sort of swoon you were in a moment before.

"I was frightened, but the doctor reassured me.

"Everything, he said, was going on in the best possible manner, and all that could be done now was to let you sleep.

"Gertrude again covered his eyes with a handkerchief, and led him back to the Rue Beautrellis.

"She fancied, however, she noticed him counting the steps."

"It was true, madame," said Bussy, "he did count them."

"This intelligence alarmed me. The young man might betray us. We decided to get rid of every trace of the hospitality we had afforded you; but the important point was first to get rid of you.

"I summoned up all my courage. It was two in the morning; the streets were deserted. Gertrude declared she could lift you up, and she proved the truth of the assertion, and, between us, we succeeded in carrying you to the embankment of the Temple. Then we returned, frightened at our daring in venturing into the streets at an hour when even men do not go abroad except in company.

"However, God watched over us. We met no one and no one noticed us.

"But after I entered the house, my emotion overpowered me and I fainted."

"Ah, madame! madame!" cried Bussy, clasping his hands, "how can I ever repay you for what you have done for me?"

There was a moment's silence, during which Bussy gazed ardently on Diane. The young woman leaned her elbow on the table and let her head rest on her hand.

In the midst of the silence, the clock of Sainte-Catherine's church struck the hour.

"Two!" exclaimed Diane, starting up. "Two, and you here!"

"Oh, madame!" entreated Bussy, "do not send me away until you have told me all. Do not send me away until you have shown me how I can be useful to you. Suppose that God has given you a brother, and now tell this brother what he can do for his sister."

"Alas, nothing," said the young woman; "it is too late."

"What happened next day?" asked Bussy; "what did you do on the day I was thinking only of you, although I was not sure you were not a delirious dream, a feverish vision?"

"During that day," resumed Diane, "Gertrude went out and met Aurilly, who was more urgent than ever; he did not say a word of what took place the evening before; but he requested an interview in his master's name.

"Gertrude pretended to yield, but said the matter must be deferred until the following Wednesday — that is to say, to-day — to give her time to influence me in the prince's favor.

"Aurilly promised his master would curb his passion until then.

"We had, therefore, a respite of three days.

"M. de Monsoreau returned in the evening.

"We related everything to him, except what concerned you. We told him how, on the night before, the duke had opened the door with a false key, but that, at that very moment, he had been attacked by five gentlemen, among whom were MM. d'Épernon and de Quélus. I had heard these two names mentioned and I repeated them.

"'Yes, yes,' he answered, 'I heard of that. So he has a false key. I suspected it.'

"'Could not the lock be changed?' I asked.

"'He would have another one made,' said the count.

"'Suppose we got bolts for the door?'

"'He will come with half a score of men and break through bolts and bars.'

"'What about the affair that was to place the prince in your power, as you mentioned?'

"'Delayed, perhaps delayed indefinitely.'

"I was struck dumb and drops of perspiration stood on my forehead; I could no longer hide from myself that the

only means of escaping the Duc d'Anjou was to wed the count.

"'Monsieur,' said I, 'the duke has promised, through his confidant, to wait till Wednesday night; I ask you to wait till Tuesday.'

"'Then on Tuesday night, at the same hour, I will be here, madame,' said the count.

"And, without another word, he rose and withdrew.

"I followed him with my eyes; but instead of going away, he took his station at the same dark corner of the wall of Les Tournelles and seemed resolved to watch over me all night.

"Every fresh proof of his devotion was a stab in my heart.

"The two days slipped by rapidly, and nothing disturbed my solitude. But what I suffered during these two days, as hour sped swiftly after hour, it would be impossible for me to describe.

"When the night of the second day arrived, I was utterly spiritless; all feeling seemed to have died away in me. I was like a statue — cold, dumb, and, apparently, insensible; my heart alone beat; the rest of my body gave no signs of life.

"Gertrude kept at the window. As to myself, I sat where I sit now, doing nothing except occasionally wiping away the perspiration that bedewed my forehead.

"Suddenly Gertrude pointed in the direction opposite me; but this gesture, which lately would have made me spring to my feet, left me unmoved.

"'Madame!' said she.

"'Well?' I asked.

"'Four men — I see four men — they are coming this way — they are opening the door — they are entering.'

"'These four men must be the Duc d'Anjou, Aurilly, and their attendants.'

"I drew my poniard and laid it beside me on the table.

"'Oh, let me see, at least,' cried Gertrude, running to the door.

"'Yes, go and see,' I answered.

"Gertrude was back in a moment.

"'Mademoiselle,' said she, 'it is the count.'

"I replaced the poniard in my dress without a word. Then I turned my face to the count.

"He was evidently terrified at my paleness.

"'What is this Gertrude tells me?' he cried; 'that you

took me for the duke, and, if I had been the duke you would have killed yourself?'

"It was the first time I saw him moved. Was his emotion real or artificial?

"'It was wrong of Gertrude to tell you that, monsieur,' I answered; 'now that it is not the duke, all is well.'

"There was a moment's silence.

"'You know that I have not come alone,' said the count.

"'Gertrude saw four men.'

"'Do you suspect who they are?'

"'I presume one is a priest and two of the others witnesses.'

"'Then you are ready to become my wife?'

"'Was it not so agreed? But I remember the treaty; it was also stipulated that unless I acknowledged the case to be urgent, I was not to marry you except in my father's presence.'

"'I remember the condition perfectly, mademoiselle; do you believe the case is urgent at present?'

"'Yes, I believe so.'

"'Well?'

"'Well, I am ready to marry you, monsieur. But — you recollect, do you not? — I will be your wife only in name until I have seen my father.'

"The count frowned and bit his lips.

"'Mademoiselle,' said he, 'it is not my intention to coerce you; though you have pledged me your word, I return it — you are free; but' —

"He approached the window and glanced into the street.

"'But,' said he, 'look!'

"I rose, impelled by that powerful attraction which forces the unfortunate to make sure of their misfortunes, and, beneath the window, I perceived a man, wrapped in a cloak, who was seemingly attempting to get into the house."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Bussy; "and you say that it was yesterday?"

"Yes, count, yesterday, about nine in the evening."

"Continue," said Bussy.

"A moment later another man, with a lantern in his hand, joined the first.

"'What do you think of those two men?' asked M. de Monsoreau.

"'I suppose it is the duke and his follower,' I answered.

Bussy groaned.

"'Now,' continued the count, 'give your orders: shall I remain or shall I withdraw?'

"I hesitated for a moment; yes, in spite of my father's letter, in spite of my pledged word, in spite of the present peril that was so palpable and so menacing, I hesitated; and had not those two men been yonder" —

"Oh, wretch that I am!" cried Bussy; "the man in the cloak was myself, and the man with the lantern was Rémy le Haudouin, the young doctor you sent for."

"It was you!" exclaimed Diane, stupefied.

"Yes, it was I. Becoming more and more convinced of the reality of my recollections, I was trying to discover the house into which I had been taken, the room to which I was carried, and the woman, or rather angel, who had appeared to me. Ah! had I not good reason to call myself a wretch?"

And Bussy was utterly crushed under the weight of that fatality which had induced Diane to give her hand to the count.

"And so," said he, after a moment, "you are his wife?"

"Since yesterday," answered Diane.

There was renewed silence, broken only by their hurried breathing.

"But," asked Diane suddenly, "how did you come to enter this house? How is it you are here?"

Bussy, without a word, showed her the key.

"A key!" cried Diane; "from whom did you get this key?"

"Did not Gertrude promise the prince to introduce him to the house this evening? He had seen both myself and M. de Monsoreau, just as we had seen him; he feared a trap and has sent me in his place."

"And you accepted this mission?" said Diane, reproachfully.

"It was the only way of reaching you. Surely you are not so unjust as to be angry with me for coming in search of one of the greatest joys and sorrows of my life?"

"Yes, I am angry," said Diane. "It would have been better if you had not seen me; and now it would be better to see me no more and forget me."

"No, madame," answered Bussy, "you are mistaken. On the contrary, it was God who led me hither in order to fathom

to its very depths this plot of which you are the victim. Listen: on the very instant I saw you I devoted to you my life. The mission I have courted is about to begin. You have asked for news of your father?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Diane, "for, in very truth, I do not know what has become of him."

"Well, then," said Bussy, "I undertake to bring you news of him. Only cherish a kindly remembrance of one who, from this hour, will live by you and for you."

"But that key?" said Diane anxiously.

"The key?" returned Bussy; "I restore it to you, for I will receive it only from your hand; but I pledge you my honor as a gentleman that never did sister confide the key of her apartment to a brother more devoted or respectful."

"I trust to the word of the brave Bussy," said Diane. "Here, monsieur."

And she gave back the key to the young man.

"Madame," said he, "in a fortnight we shall know who and what M. de Monsoreau is."

And saluting Diane with an air in which respect was blended with ardent love and deep sadness, Bussy withdrew.

Diane leaned toward the door to listen to the sound of the young man's retreating footsteps, and long after that sound had died away, she was listening still, with beating heart and eyes bathed in tears.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW LONG IT TOOK HENRI III. TO TRAVEL FROM PARIS TO FONTAINEBLEAU.

THE sun that arose four or five hours after the events we have just related saw by its pale light, which barely succeeded in silvering the edges of a reddish cloud, the departure of Henri III. for Fontainebleau, where, as we have also mentioned, there was to be a great hunting party in two days.

This departure, which in the case of another prince might have passed unnoticed, created a sensation by the bustle, noise, and confusion it led in its train; in this resembling all the incidents in the life of this strange monarch whose reign we have undertaken to portray.

Before eight o'clock in the morning a crowd of gentlemen on duty, mounted on good horses and wrapped in fur cloaks, rode out through the gateway situated between the Cour de Coin and the Rue de l'Astruce, and formed a line on the Quai du Louvre; after them came a legion of pages, next a multitude of lackeys, and last, a company of Swiss, which went immediately in front of the royal litter.

This litter, drawn by eight magnificently caparisoned mules, merits the honor of a detailed description.

It was a machine, almost in the form of a square, resting on four wheels; it was furnished with a superabundance of cushions inside and hung with curtains of brocade on the outside; it was about fifteen feet long and eight feet broad. When the roads were uneven or hilly an indefinite number of oxen was substituted for the eight mules; their slow but vigorous pertinacity, although not conducive to speed, gave assurance, however, that they would reach their goal some time or other — if not in an hour, at least in two or three.

This machine contained Henri III. and all his court, the Queen, Louise de Vaudemont, excepted, who, we may as well say, was of so little account in her husband's court, unless during a period of processions and pilgrimages, that it is scarce worth while mentioning her.

Let us, therefore, leave out the poor Queen, and direct our attention to the composition of King Henri's court when that monarch travelled.

It consisted, first, of King Henri himself; his physician; Marc Miron, his chaplain, whose name has not come down to us; our old acquaintance, Chicot, the jester; five or six of the minions in favor, who, for the nonce, were Quélus, Schomberg, D'Épernon, D'O, and Maugiron; a couple of huge greyhounds, that yawned incessantly and slipped in their long, snake-like heads between all these people who sat, or stood, or knelt, or reclined on cushions; and a basket of little English dogs, which alternately rested on the King's knees or hung from his neck, suspended by a chain or by ribbon.

Occasionally a hind was brought from a sort of kennel made for her accommodation, and suckled this basketful of puppies from her milk-swollen udders; the two hounds looking on sympathetically the while as they rubbed their sharp muzzles against the string of beads, fashioned like death's-

heads, that rattled at the King's side; they knew the favor they enjoyed and were not jealous.

From the ceiling of the litter swung a cage of gilt copper wire; it contained the most beautiful doves in the world, with plumage white as snow and black rings round their necks.

If, perchance, a lady entered the royal litter the menagerie was augmented by the presence of two or three monkeys of the sapajo species, the monkey enjoying, for the moment, great favor among the exquisites at the court of the last of the Valois.

An image of Our Lady of Chartres, wrought in marble by Jean Goujon for Henri II., stood in a gilt niche at the back of the litter; she gazed down on her divine son with eyes that seemed astonished at all they saw.

It was natural, then, that all the pamphlets of the time, and there was no scarcity of them, and all the satires of the period, and there were enough and to spare of them, should have done this litter the honor of directing attention to it frequently; their usual designation for it was "Noah's Ark."

The King sat at the back of the litter, just under the niche and statue; at his feet lay Quélus and Maugiron, plaiting ribbons. This was one of the most serious occupations of the young people of that era; some of them had succeeded in weaving twelve different pieces into a braid, an unknown art till then, and unfortunately lost since that period; Schomberg, in a corner, was embroidering his coat of arms on a piece of tapestry, as well as a motto, which he believed new, but which was really not new at all; in another corner the chaplain and the doctor were chatting; D'O and D'Épernon were looking through the hangings, and, as they had been awakened too early, were yawning as wearily as the greyhounds; and, finally, Chicot, seated on the edge of one of the curtains, with his legs hanging outside the litter in order to be able to jump out and in again as the whim might seize him, was singing psalms, reciting lampoons, or making anagrams; he managed to twist the names of the courtiers into forms that were infinitely disagreeable to the personages whose individuality was thus mangled by the liberties he took with their cognomens.

On reaching the Place du Châtelet, Chicot began intoning a canticle.

The chaplain, who, as we have said, was talking with Miron, turned round, frowning.

"Chicot, my friend," said the King, "beware! you may make mincemeat of my minions, tear my majesty to tatters, say what you like of God, — God is good, — but do not get into a quarrel with the Church."

"Thanks for your advice, my son," returned Chicot, "I did not see our worthy chaplain, who was discoursing yonder with the doctor on the subject of the last corpse sent him to bury; he was complaining it was the third that day, and always came at meal-time, thereby disturbing his digestion. Your words are golden, my son; no more psalms; they are too old. But I'll sing you a song that is quite new."

"To what air?" asked the King.

"To the same air always;" and he began at the top of his voice:

"'Our King a hundred millions owes'" —

"I owe more than that," said Henri; "your ballad-monger has not been correctly informed."

Chicot began again, without noticing the interruption:

"'Our King *two* hundred millions owes,
Of which his minions had the spending —
To foot the bills, they now propose
To tax his subjects unoffending,
Propose new imposts, wrongful laws,
To wring the last sou from the peasant —
And all to glut their harpy maws,
And make their mean lives gay and pleasant.'"

"Upon my word," said Quélus, going on with his plaiting, "you have a fine voice, Chicot; the second stanza, my friend."

"I say, Valois," said Chicot, not deigning to answer Quélus, "order thy friends not to call me their friend; it humiliates me."

"Speak in verse, Chicot; your prose is not worth a straw," replied the King.

"Agreed," returned Chicot, and he went on:

"'A minion's as vile as vile can be,
He's garbed in such lascivious fashion
The wife who dared to dress so free
Her husband soon would lay the lash on!
His ample ruff looks very nice;
His neck turns easily inside it,
Because that ruff is starched with rice —
As for common wheat starch — he can't abide it!'"

"Bravo!" said the King; "was it not you, D'O, that invented rice-starch?"

"No, sire," said Chicot, "it was M. de Saint-Mégrin, who was killed last year by M. de Mayenne. What the devil! would you rob a poor dead man of the honor due him? Saint-Mégrin used to reckon that his only chance of going down to posterity rested on this starch and on what he did to M. de Guise. Now, if you take away the starch from him, you stop him when he is only half way on his journey."

And, without paying attention to the expression on the King's face, which grew dark at the recollection evoked by his jester, Chicot continued:

"'The way he wears his hair is queer'—

"Of course," said Chicot, interrupting himself, "the allusion is for the minions only, that is understood."

"Yes, yes; go on," said Schomberg.

Chicot resumed:

"'The way he wears his hair is queer,
Although it 's clipped symmetrically:
'T is long in front from ear to ear,
And cropped behind, which does n't tally.'"

"Your song is stale already," said D'Épernon.

"Stale! Why, it was made yesterday."

"Well, the fashion changed this morning. Look!"

And D'Épernon took off his cap and showed Chicot his hair, which was almost as closely shaved in front as behind.

"Did ever any one see such an ugly head?" exclaimed Chicot.

And he continued:

"'With sticky gums his locks are fed,
And twisted and peaked that he may look daring;
A cap is perched on his empty head—
And now you 've got his portrait and bearing.'

"I pass over the fourth stanza," said Chicot; "it is so immodest it might shock you."

And he went on:

"'I wonder if our sires of old,
Whose deeds illumine history's pages,
Whose feats of emprise, high and bold,
Will ring forever through the ages,

Would have declined the parlous fight
Till they had touched with paint their faces,
Have kept away, unless bedight
With curls and wigs and frills and laces!'"

"Bravo!" said Henri; "if my brother were here he would be very grateful to you, Chicot."

"Whom callest thou brother, my son?" asked Chicot. "Would it be, peradventure, Joseph Foulon, Abbot of St. Genevieve, where thou goest to say thy prayers?"

"No, no," returned Henri, who always took kindly to the drolleries of his jester, "I mean my brother François."

"Ah! thou 'rt right, my son; the other one is not thy brother in God, but thy brother in the devil. Good! good! thou speakest of François, child of France by the grace of God, Duke of Brabant, Lauthier, Luxembourg, Gueldre, Alençon, Anjou, Touraine, Berry, Évreux, and Château-Thierry, Count of Flandres, Holland, Zeland, Zutphen, Maine, Perche, Mantes, Frise, and Malines, Defender of the liberty of Belgium, to whom nature gave one nose and to whom the small-pox hath given two, and on whom I — even I — have made this quatrain:

"'Nothing strange the fact discloses
That our François has two noses.
Two noses on a double-face
Are surely in their proper place.'"

The minions fell into fits of laughter, for the Duc d'Anjou was their personal enemy, and the epigram against the prince made them forget for the moment the lampoon he had sung against themselves.

As for the King, he had been hardly touched, so far, by this running fire, and laughed louder than anybody, sparing no one, giving sugar and pastry to his dogs and the rough edge of his tongue to his brother and his brother's friends.

Suddenly Chicot shouted:

"Ah, that is not judicious! Henri, Henri, it is rash and imprudent."

"What do you mean?" said the King.

"Take Chicot's word for it, you ought not to confess to such things as that. Shame! Shame!"

"What things?" asked Henri, astonished.

"The things you say of yourself when you sign your name. Ah, Harry! ah, my son!"

"Be on your guard, sire," said Quélus, who suspected the affected gentleness of Chicot covered some malicious roguery.

"What the devil do you mean?" inquired the King.

"When you write your signature, how do you sign? Be honest."

"*Pardieu!* I sign — I sign myself — Henri de Valois."

"Good! Be kind enough to notice, gentlemen, that I did not force him to say so. Let us see, now; would there be any way of finding a V among these thirteen letters?"

"Undoubtedly. Valois begins with a V."

"Take out your tablets, Messire Chaplain; I want you to take down the real name of the King — the name that must be signed by him henceforth; Henri de Valois is only an anagram."

"How?"

"Yes, only an anagram; I am going to tell you the true name of his Majesty now happily reigning. We say: In Henri de Valois there is a *V;* put a *V* on your tablets."

"Done," said D'Épernon.

"Is there not also an *i?*"

"Certainly; it is the last letter of the name 'Henri.'"

"How great must be the malice of men," said Chicot, "when it tempts them to separate letters which are naturally so closely connected! Place me the *i* beside the *V*. Are you through?"

"Yes," said D'Épernon.

"And now let us look and see if we cannot discover an *l;* you 've got it, have you? and *a*, we 've got that, too; now for another *i*, he 's ours; and an *n* for the finish. Capital! Do you know how to read, Nogaret?"

"To my shame, I confess that I do," said D'Épernon.

"Fiddlesticks! thou knave; thou dost not rank high enough as a noble to be able to boast of thy ignorance."

"You rascal!" returned D'Épernon, raising his cane over Chicot.

"Strike, but spell," said Chicot.

D'Épernon laughed and spelled.

"V-i-l-a-i-n, *vilain*," said he.

"Good!" cried Chicot. "And now you see, Henri, how the thing begins; there is your real baptismal name already discovered. I expect you to give me a pension like the one bestowed on M. Amyot by our royal brother Charles IX., as soon as I discover your family name."

"I expect I shall have you cudgelled, Chicot," said the King.

"And pray where are the canes gathered with which gentlemen are cudgelled, my son? Is it in Poland? Tell me that."

"It seems to me, however," said Quélus, "that M. de Mayenne had no trouble in finding one, my poor Chicot, the day he detected you with his mistress."

"That is an account that has yet to be settled. Don't be uneasy about it, Monsieur Cupido, the score is chalked down — there; it will be wiped off some day."

And Chicot laid his hand on his forehead, which proves that, even in those times, the head was recognized as the seat of the memory.

"I say, Quélus," exclaimed D'Épernon, "we 're going to lose sight of the family name, and all through your gabbling."

"Don't be alarmed," said Chicot, "I hold it; if I were speaking to M. de Guise, I would say: I hold it by the horns; but to you, Henri, I will content myself with saying: by the ears."

"The name! The name!" cried all the young men together.

"We have, among the remaining letters, a capital *H;* set down the *H*, Nogaret."

D'Épernon obeyed.

"Then an *e*, then an *r*, then, over yonder, in Valois, an *o;* then, as you separate the prænomen from the nomen by what the grammarians call the particle, I lay my hand on a *d* and on an *e*, which, with the *s* at the end of the race-name, will make for us — will make for us — Spell, D'Épernon; what does H, e, r, o, d, e, s spell?"

"Herodes," said D'Épernon.

"*Vilain Herodes!*" cried the King.

"Quite correct," said Chicot; "and that is the name you sign every day of your life, my son. Oh, fie!"

And Chicot fell back, expressing by his attitude all the symptoms of a chaste and bashful horror.

"Monsieur Chicot," said the King, "there is a limit to my endurance."

"Why," returned Chicot, "I state but a fact. I say what *is*, and nothing else; but that is the way with kings: give them a caution, and they at once get angry."

"A fine genealogy you have made for me!" said Henri.

"Do not disown it, my son," said Chicot." *Ventre de*

biche! It is a rather good one for a king who needs the help of the Jews two or three times a month."

"That rascal is determined to have the last word," cried the King. "Hold your tongues, gentlemen; when he finds no one answers him, he will stop."

That very moment there was profound silence — a silence Chicot, who appeared to be paying particular attention to the street they were travelling in, did not show the slightest inclination to break. This state of things lasted several minutes, when, just as they came to the corner of the Rue des Noyers, beyond the Place Maubert, Chicot jumped from the litter, pushed through the guards, and fell on his knees in front of a rather good-looking house with a carved wooden balcony resting on a painted entablature.

"Hah, pagan!" cried the King, "if you want to kneel, kneel, at least, before the cross in the middle of the Rue Sainte-Geneviève, and not before that house. Is it that there is an oratory or an altar inside it?"

But Chicot did not answer; he had flung himself on his knees and was saying, at the pitch of his voice, the following prayer, of which the King did not lose a single word:

"God of goodness! God of justice! here is the house. I recognize it well, and shall always recognize it. Here is the house where Chicot suffered, if not for thee, O God, at least for one of thy creatures. Chicot has never asked thee for vengeance on M. de Mayenne, the author of his martyrdom, nor on Maître Nicolas David, its instrument. No, Lord, Chicot has known how to wait, for Chicot is patient, although he is not eternal, and for six years, one of them a leap year, Chicot has been piling up the interest of the little account opened between him and MM. de Mayenne and Nicolas David; now at ten per cent., which is the legal rate, since it is the rate at which the King borrows — the interest, accumulated in seven years, doubles the capital. Grant, then, O great and just God, that Chicot's patience may last another year, and that the lashes Chicot received in this house by order of that princely Lorraine butcher and that cut-throat Norman pettifogger, lashes which cost the said Chicot a pint of blood, may bring a return of a hundred lashes and two pints of blood for each of them; so M. de Mayenne, fat as he is, and Nicolas David, long as he is, will no longer have blood or hide enough to pay Chicot, and will be forced into bankruptcy to the tune of a

deficit of fifteen or twenty per cent., seeing that the eightieth or the eighty-fifth stroke will be the death of them.

"In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen!"

"Amen!" said the King.

Chicot kissed the ground, and, in the midst of the utter bewilderment of all the spectators, who were entirely in the dark as to the meaning of the scene, he then resumed his place in the litter.

"Now, then," said the King, who, though he had flung most of his prerogatives to others during the last three years, felt that he was, at least, entitled to the earliest information about an incident of importance, "now, then, Master Chicot, why did you repeat that long and singular litany? Why did you beat your breast so furiously? What did you mean by those mummeries before a house that, to all appearance, has no religious character?"

"Sire," answered the jester, "Chicot is like the fox: Chicot scents and licks the stones where he left his blood behind him, waiting for the day when he shall crush the heads of those who spilled it on those same stones."

"Sire!" cried Quélus, "I am ready to bet that Chicot has mentioned the name of the Duc de Mayenne in his prayer, and I think your Majesty heard him do so; I will, therefore, also bet that this prayer had some connection with the flogging we spoke of a while go."

"Bet, O Seigneur Jacques de Lévis, Comte de Quélus!" said Chicot; "bet and you 'll win."

"Go on, Chicot," said the King.

"Yes, sire," returned the jester. "In that house Chicot had a mistress, a good and charming girl; nay, more, a lady, for that matter. One night that he visited her, a jealous prince had the house surrounded, had Chicot seized and beaten so roughly that Chicot was forced to jump from yon little balcony into the street. Now, as it was a miracle that Chicot was not killed, every time that Chicot passes in front of that house he kneels and prays, and, in his prayer, thanks the Lord for his escape."

"Poor Chicot! And you were finding fault with him, sire; in my opinion he has been really acting like a good Christian in all he has done."

"So you got quite a drubbing, my poor Chicot?"

"Yes, sire, quite a drubbing; but I am sorry it was n't worse."

"Why?"

"I should have liked if a few sword-cuts had been added."

"For your sins?"

"No, for M. de Mayenne's."

"Ah, I understand; your intention is to render unto Cæsar"—

"No, not Cæsar; don't confuse things, sire. Cæsar is the great general, valiant warrior, the eldest brother, the person who would be King of France; no, he has to reckon with Henri de Valois; pay your own debts, my son, and I'll pay mine."

Henri was not fond of hearing of his cousin the Duc de Guise; consequently, he became so grave during the rest of the time it took them to reach Bicêtre that the conversation was not renewed.

The journey from the Louvre to Bicêtre had occupied three hours; the optimists were ready to wager that they would be at Fontainebleau the next day, while the pessimists were equally ready to bet that they could not get there until noon the day after.

Chicot insisted that they would never arrive at all.

Once outside of Paris, there was less confusion on the line of march, and the throng seemed to get along more comfortably; the morning was rather fine, the wind less stormy, and the sun had at length succeeded in piercing through the clouds. The day was not unlike one of those breezy October days when the sound of the falling leaves comes to the ears of the traveller and his eyes dwell softly on the mysteries of the murmuring woods.

It was three in the evening when the procession reached the outer walls of Juvisy. From that point the bridge built over the Orge could be already seen, and also the Cour-de-France, a great hostelry which dispersed far and wide on the evening breeze the delicious odors of its kitchens and the joyous din of its customers.

Chicot's nose seized these culinary emanations on the wing. He leaned out of the litter, and saw in the distance a number of men muffled up in fur cloaks. Among them was a short, fat personage whose broad-brimmed hat hid his face entirely.

These men entered hurriedly as soon as they saw the cortège.

But the stout little man did not go in quick enough to hinder Chicot's eyes from getting a good view of him. He was hardly inside before the Gascon jumped from the royal litter, went for

his horse, which a page had charge of, and hid in a recess in one of the walls. It was now nearly nightfall, and the procession moved past him, on its way to Essonnes, where the King intended sleeping. When the last horseman had disappeared, when the distant sound of the wheels of the litter had died away, the jester left his place of concealment, stole to the other side of the castle, and then presented himself at the door of the hostelry, as if he had come from Fontainebleau. Before entering, Chicot glanced quickly through a window and saw with pleasure that the men he had remarked before were still in the inn; among them, the short, stout individual who had clearly attracted his special attention. But as Chicot had, seemingly, excellent reasons for avoiding the notice of the aforesaid individual, instead of entering the room occupied by this personage, he ordered a bottle of wine to be brought to him in the room opposite, taking care to place himself in such a position that no one could come in unobserved by him.

Prudently selecting a dark nook in this apartment, Chicot was enabled to see everything in the other chamber, even a corner of the chimney, wherein was seated on a stool his short, stout man, who, evidently unconscious that he had to dread any investigation, allowed the warmth and glow of the bright fire in the grate to play on his face until it was bathed in a flood of light.

"I was not mistaken," murmured Chicot, "and when I was saying my prayer before the house in the Rue des Noyers, I felt as if I scented the return of that man. But why this return on the sly to the good city of our friend Herodes? Why did he hide when the King was passing? Ah! Pilate! Pilate! what if God, perchance, refused me the year I asked of him and forced me to a liquidation earlier than I thought of?"

Chicot had soon the delight of perceiving that he was favorably placed, not only to see but to hear, benefiting by one of those acoustic effects which chance sometimes capriciously produces. As soon as he noticed this, he listened now as intently as he had looked before.

"Gentlemen," said the stout little man to his companions, "I think it is time to leave; the last lackey passed a long time ago, and I am sure the road is now safe."

"Perfectly safe," answered a voice that made Chicot jump — a voice that proceeded from a body to which Chicot had not

heretofore paid any attention, being absorbed in the contemplation of the principal personage.

The individual to whom the body belonged from which this voice proceeded was as long as the person he addressed as "monseigneur" was short, as pale as the other was ruddy, as obsequious as the other was arrogant.

"Ha! Maître Nicolas," said Chicot to himself, laughing noiselessly: "*Tu quoque* — that 's good. Our luck will be of the worst, if, this time, we separate without having a few words."

And Chicot emptied his glass and paid the score at once, so that nothing might delay him whenever he should feel like going.

It was a prudent forethought, for the seven persons who had attracted Chicot's attention paid in their turn, or, rather, the short, fat individual paid for all, and each of them, receiving his horse from a groom or lackey, leaped into the saddle. Then the little band started on the road to Paris and was soon lost in the evening fogs.

"Good!" said Chicot, "he is going to Paris; then I 'll go there also."

And Chicot, mounting his horse, followed them at a distance, keeping their gray cloaks always in sight, or, when prudence held him back, taking care to be within reach of the echo of their horses' hoofs.

The cavalcade left the Fromenteau road, crossed the lands between it and Choisy, passed the Seine by the Charenton bridge, returned by the Porte Saint-Antoine, and, like a swarm of bees, was lost in the Hôtel de Guise, the gate of which closed on the visitors immediately, as if it had been kept open solely for their convenience.

"Good again!" said Chicot, hiding at a corner in the Rue des Quatre-Fils; "Guise is in this as well as Mayenne. At first the thing was only queer; now it is becoming interesting."

And Chicot lay in wait a full hour, in spite of the cold and hunger that were beginning to bite him with their sharp teeth. At last the gate opened; but instead of seven cavaliers muffled up in cloaks, it was seven monks of Sainte Geneviève, muffled up in cowls, that appeared, with enormous rosaries rattling at their sides.

"Upon my word!" thought Chicot, "this is a change with

a vengeance! Is the Hôtel de Guise so embalmed in holiness that sinners are metamorphosed into saints by merely crossing its threshold? The thing grows more and more interesting."

And Chicot followed the monks as he had followed the cavaliers, not having the least doubt but that the frocks covered the same bodies the cloaks had covered lately.

The monks passed the Seine at Nôtre-Dame bridge, crossed the Cité, marched over the Petit-Pont, cut through the Place Maubert, and ascended the Rue Sainte-Geneviève.

"Ugh!" gasped Chicot, as he doffed his cap before the house in the Rue des Noyers where he had said his prayer in the morning, "are we actually returning to Fontainebleau? In that case I have n't taken the shortest route. But no, I am mistaken, we're not going so far."

To show that his surmise was correct, the monks halted at the gate of the Abbey of St. Geneviève and were soon lost in the porch, within which another monk of the same order might have been seen attentively examining the hands of those who entered.

"*Tudieu!*" thought Chicot, "it seems that to get inside this convent you must have your hands clean. Decidedly, something extraordinary is happening."

After this reflection, Chicot, rather puzzled to know what to do to keep the persons he was following in sight, looked round. What was his amazement to see all the streets full of hoods, and all these hoods advancing to the abbey, some in couples, some in groups, but all converging to the same point.

"Aha!" muttered Chicot, "there must be a meeting of the general chapter to-night in the abbey, and all the Genevievans in France have been summoned to take part in it! Upon my faith, for the first time in my life I 'd like to be present at a chapter."

The monks, after entering the porch, showed their hands, or rather something in their hands, and passed.

"I certainly should be nothing loth to pass in with them also," said Chicot to himself; "but two thing are essential: first, the venerated robe that enfolds them, for, to my eyes, there is no laic among these holy personages; and secondly, that thing they show the brother porter, for, assuredly, they are showing something. Ah! Brother Gorenflot! Brother Gorenflot! if I could only lay my hand on thee, my worthy friend!"

This apostrophe was extracted from Chicot by the recollection of one of the most venerable monks of the Order of St. Geneviève, Chicot's usual table-companion when Chicot did not happen to eat at the Louvre, in good sooth, the very person with whom our Gascon had eaten widgeon and drunk spiced wine in the restaurant by the Porte Saint-Martin on the day of the procession of the penitents.

Meantime, the monks continued to arrive in such numbers that it almost looked as if half Paris had donned the frock, while the brother porter scrutinized them as closely as ever.

"Odzookens!" said Chicot to himself, "there is surely something out of the way occurring to-night. I must keep my curiosity on the go to the end. It's half-past seven; Brother Gorenflot must be through with his alms-collecting. I'll find him at the *Corne d'Abondance*, it is his hour for supper."

Leaving the legion of monks to perform their evolutions in the neighborhood of the abbey and afterward to disappear within its portals, and setting his horse to a gallop, he gained the Rue Saint-Jacques, where, facing the cloister of Saint-Benoit, rose the flourishing hostelry of the *Corne d'Abondance*, a favorite resort of the monks and scholars.

Chicot was not known in the house as a regular customer, but rather as one of those mysterious guests who came occasionally to squander a gold crown and a scrap of their sanity in the establishment of Maître Claude Bonhomet, for so was named the dispenser of the gifts of Ceres and Bacchus poured out without cessation from the famous cornucopia that served as the sign of the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH THE READER MAKES BROTHER GORENFLOT'S ACQUAINTANCE.

To a lovely day had succeeded a lovely night; except that, cold as had been the day, the night was colder still. The vapor exhaled by the breathing of the belated citizens, tinged with red by the glare of the lamps, could be seen condensing under their hats; the footsteps of the passers-by on the frozen ground could be distinctly heard, as well as the vigorous *hum*, extracted by the chilliness of the season and "reverberated by

the elastic surfaces," as a professor of physics would say at the present day. In a word, it was one of those nice spring frosts that add a double charm to the rosy tints which shine on the panes of a hostelry.

Chicot first entered the dining-room, peered into every nook and corner, and, not finding the man he sought among Maître Claude's guests, he passed familiarly into the kitchen.

The master of the establishment was reading a pious book, while a little pool of grease in a huge frying-pan was trying to attain the degree of heat necessary for the introduction of several whitings, dusted with flour, into the said pan.

At the noise made by Chicot's entrance, Maître Bonhomet raised his head.

"Ah, it 's you, monsieur," said he, closing his book. "Good evening and a good appetite to you."

"Thanks for both your wishes, although one of them is made as much for your own profit as for mine. But that will depend."

"Will depend! how?"

"You know I don't like eating by myself?"

"Oh, if you like, I 'll sup with you."

"Thanks, my dear host, I know you 're a capital companion; but I am looking for some one."

"Brother Gorenflot, perhaps?" asked Bonhomet.

"The very person," answered Chicot; "has he begun his supper yet?"

"No, not yet; still, you had better make haste."

"Why?"

"Because he 'll have finished it in five minutes."

"Brother Gorenflot has not begun his supper and will have finished in five minutes, you say?"

And Chicot shook his head, which, in every country in the world, is accepted as a sign of incredulity.

"Monsieur," said Maître Claude, "to-day is Wednesday, and we are beginning Lent."

"And suppose you are," said Chicot in a tone that proved he was rather dubious as to the religious emotions of Gorenflot, "what follows?"

"Humph!" answered Claude, with a gesture which clearly meant: "I 'm in the dark as much as you are, but so it is."

"Decidedly," muttered Chicot, "there must be something wrong with this sublunary sphere. Five minutes for Goren-

flot's supper! It was fated that I should witness miracles to-day."

And with the air of a traveller whose feet have touched an unknown country, Chicot made his way to a private room, and pushed open a glass door, over which hung a woollen curtain checkered in white and red. Away at the back, he perceived by the light of a sputtering candle the worthy monk, who was listlessly turning over on his plate a scanty morsel of spinach which he essayed to render more savory by blending with this herbaceous substance a fragment of Surènes cheese.

While the excellent brother is working at this mixture, with a sullen expression that augurs badly for the success of the combination, let us try to depict his personality so completely and veraciously for the benefit of our readers as in some sort to recompense them for their misfortune in not having already made his acquaintance.

Brother Gorenflot was thirty-eight years old, and five feet high, by standard measure. His stature, a little scanty perhaps, was made up for, as he was in the habit of stating himself, by the admirable harmony of the proportions; for what he lost in height he gained in breadth, measuring nearly three feet in diameter from shoulder to shoulder, which, as every one should know, is equivalent to nine feet in circumference.

From the centre of these herculean shoulders rose a thick neck intersected by muscles as big as your thumb and standing out like cords. Unfortunately, the neck harmonized with the other proportions, by which we mean that it was very bulky and very short, and it was to be feared that any great emotion would result in apoplexy for Brother Gorenflot. But, being perfectly conscious of this defect and of the danger to which it exposed him, Brother Gorenflot never allowed any strong emotion to get the better of him; it was, in fact, very seldom — we are bound to make this statement — that he was as visibly thrown off his balance to such an extent as he was at the moment when Chicot entered his room.

"Hello! my friend, what are you doing there?" cried our Gascon, looking alternately at the vegetables, at Gorenflot, and then at the unsnuffed candle and at a goblet filled to the brim with water, tinted by a few drops of wine.

"You see for yourself, my brother. I am having my supper," replied Gorenflot, in a voice as resonant as that of the bell of the abbey.

"You call that supper, Gorenflot? Herbs, cheese? Oh, pshaw!" cried Chicot.

"This is the first Wednesday of Lent; let us think of our souls, my brother, let us think of our souls!" answered Gorenflot, in a nasal twang, raising his eyes sanctimoniously to heaven.

Chicot was completely taken aback; his looks indicated that he had once seen Gorenflot glorify the holy season on which they were entering in quite a different manner.

"Our souls!" he cried, "and what the devil have herbs and water to do with our souls?"

"'On Friday meat thou shalt not eat,
And not on Wednesday, either,'"

said Gorenflot.

"At what hour did you breakfast?"

"I have not breakfasted, brother," he replied, in a tone that was growing more and more nasal.

"Oh, if your religion consists in speaking through your nose, I can beat any monk in Christendom at that game. And if you have not been breakfasting, my brother," said Chicot, with a snuffle that at once challenged comparison with that of Brother Gorenflot, "what, in the name of mercy, have you been doing?"

"I have been composing a sermon," answered Gorenflot, proudly raising his head.

"Oh, nonsense! a sermon, indeed! and what for?"

"To be delivered to-night in the abbey."

"Stay!" thought Chicot. "A sermon to-night? That 's queer."

"It is about time for me to leave," said Gorenflot, taking his first mouthful of the spinach and cheese, "it's time for me to think of returning, the congregation may get impatient."

Chicot remembered the crowd of monks he had seen on the way to the abbey, and as M. de Mayenne was, in all probability, among these monks, he wondered how it was that Gorenflot, whose eloquence had not been heretofore one of his titles to fame, had been selected by his superior, Joseph Foulon, the then Abbot of Sainte Geneviève, to preach before the Lorraine prince and such a numerous assembly.

"Pshaw!" said he. "When do you preach?"

"Between nine and half-past nine, brother."

"Good! it's only a quarter to nine now. Surely you can give me five minutes. *Ventre de biche!* It's more than a week since we had a chance of hobnobbing together."

"That has not been your fault," said Gorenflot, "and our friendship has not been lessened thereby, I assure you, my beloved brother. The duties of your office keep you at the side of our great King Henri III., whom God preserve; the duties of mine impose upon me the task of collecting alms, and, after that, of praying; it is not astonishing, then, that our paths should lie apart."

"True," said Chicot, "but, *corbœuf!* is n't that the more reason why, when we do meet, we should be jolly?"

"Oh, I am as jolly as jolly can be," answered Gorenflot, in a tone that was almost heart-broken, "but that does not render it the less necessary for me to leave you."

And the monk attempted to rise.

"At least finish your herbs," said Chicot, laying a hand on his shoulder and forcing him to sit down again.

Gorenflot gazed on the spinach and heaved a sigh.

Then his eyes happening to fall on the colored water, he turned away his head.

Chicot saw it was time to begin operations.

"So you remember the little dinner I was just speaking about?" said he. "Yes, it was, you know, at the Porte Montmartre, where, while our great King Henri III. was belaboring himself and others, we were eating widgeons from the Grange-Batelière marshes, garnished with crabs, and were drinking that nice Burgundy, — what's this its name was? — a wine, I think, you discovered yourself."

"It was the wine of my native country, La Romanée," answered Gorenflot.

"Ah, yes, now I recollect, the milk you sucked after making your appearance in this world, O worthy son of Noah!"

With a sad smile, Gorenflot licked his lips.

"What have you to say about the wine?" asked Chicot.

"It was good; but there is better," answered the monk.

"Just what our host, Claude Bonhomet, declared some time ago; he claims he has fifty bottles in his cellar compared to which that we drank at the Porte Montmartre was but sour vinegar."

"He speaks the truth," said Gorenflot.

"What! the truth, does he?" cried Chicot, "and here you

are drinking that abominable red water when you have only to hold out your hand for wine like that! Faugh!"

And Chicot seized the goblet and flung its contents out of the room.

"There is a time for everything, my brother," said Gorenflot. "Wine is good when we have nothing to do after we drink it except glorify the God who made it; but when you have to preach a sermon, water is to be preferred, not because of its taste, but for its utility: *facunda est aqua.*"

"Bah!" retorted Chicot. "*Magis facundum est vinum*, and the proof of it is that I, who have also a sort of sermon to preach, and have the utmost faith in my prescription, am going to order a bottle of that same La Romanée; and, by the way, what would you advise me to have with it, Gorenflot?"

"Don't have any of those herbs with it, at all events; they're nauseous."

"Faugh, faugh," exclaimed Chicot, as he seized Gorenflot's plate and carried it to his nose, "faugh!"

And, thereupon, opening a little window, he hurled both herbs and plate into the street.

Then turning back:

"Maître Claude!" he cried.

The host, who had been probably listening at the door, appeared at once.

"Maître Claude," said Chicot, "bring me two bottles of the Romanée which you hold to be better than anybody's."

"Two bottles!" said Gorenflot; "why two, as I don't drink?"

"If you were drinking, I'd order four, or five, or six; I'd order all there are in the house," said Chicot. "But when I drink by myself, I'm but a poor drinker, and two bottles will be enough for me."

"In fact, two bottles are moderate, and if you eat no meat with them, your confessor will not quarrel with you."

"Oh, fie, fie!" said Chicot, "to hint at any one's eating meat on a Wednesday in Lent!"

And making his way to the larder, while Maître Bonhomet was making his way to the cellar, he drew therefrom a fine fat pullet of the Mans breed.

"What are you doing there?" said Gorenflot, who could not help taking an interest in the Gascon's movements; "what are you doing there, my brother?"

"Why, you see! I'm appropriating this carp for fear some one else might lay his hands on it. During the Wednesday of Lent there's always a fierce competition for these sorts of comestibles."

"A carp!" cried the astounded monk.

"A carp beyond doubt," said Chicot, holding the succulent fowl up before his eyes.

"And how long is it since a carp had a beak?" asked Gorenflot.

"A beak?" exclaimed the Gascon; "you mean a mouth!"

"And wings?" continued the monk.

"Fins."

"And feathers?"

"Scales. My dear Gorenflot, you must be drunk."

"Drunk!" cried Gorenflot, "I drunk! A likely thing, indeed! I who have eaten only herbs and drunk only water."

"Nothing surprising. The spinach has upset your stomach and the water has gone to your head."

"Well, here is our host; he'll settle it."

"Settle what?"

"Whether it is a carp or a pullet."

"Agreed, but first let him uncork the wine. I want to see if it is the same. Uncork, Maître Claude."

Maître Bonhomet uncorked a bottle and poured out half a glass for Chicot.

Chicot swallowed it off and smacked his lips.

"Ah!" said he, "I am a poor taster and my tongue has no memory. It is impossible for me to tell if it's worse or better than that we drank at the Porte Montmartre. I am not sure even but that it is the same."

Gorenflot's eyes sparkled as they rested on the couple of ruby drops still left in the bottom of Chicot's glass.

"Now, my good brother," said Chicot, pouring a thimbleful of wine into the monk's glass, "you are placed in this world for the good of your neighbor; enlighten me."

Gorenflot took the glass, raised it to his lips, and slowly swallowed the small quantity of liquid it contained.

"It's of the same country for certain," said he, "but"—

"But," repeated Chicot.

"I tasted too little to be sure whether it is better or worse."

"And yet I have such a longing to know," said Chicot. "Confound it! I do not like to be deceived, and only that

you have a sermon to preach, my brother, I should ask you to give this wine another trial."

"If it would be doing you a favor," said the monk.

"Would n't it, though!" rejoined Chicot.

And he half filled Gorenflot's glass.

Gorenflot raised the glass to his lips with the same solemnity as before, and sipped it with the same conscientious deliberation.

"It is better," said he, "better; I stake my reputation on that."

"Bah! you had an understanding with our host!"

"A good drinker ought, at the first draught, to recognize the wine, at the second the quality, at the third the age."

"Oh, the age," said Chicot; "I can't tell you how much I should like to know the age of that wine!"

"The easiest thing in the world," replied the monk, holding out his glass, "just a few drops, and you 'll know it."

Chicot filled three-fourths of the glass. Gorenflot swallowed it slowly, but without taking the glass from his lips.

"1561," said he, as he put the glass back on the table.

"Hurrah!" cried Claude Bonhomet, "1561; that 's the naked truth."

"Brother Gorenflot," said the Gascon, doffing to him, "Rome has canonized many who were not as deserving of the honor as you."

"Oh," said Gorenflot modestly, "it is partly the result of experience."

"And of genius!" asserted Chicot. "Experience alone could never achieve such results. I 'm a living proof of that, for my experience has not, I venture to say, been inconsiderable. But what are you doing now?"

"You see for yourself, I 'm getting up."

"Why?"

"To meet my congregation."

"Without eating a piece of my carp?"

"Ah! true," said Gorenflot; "it would seem, my worthy brother, that you know even less about eating than drinking. Maître Bonhomet, please tell us what is that creature?"

And Brother Gorenflot pointed to the object under discussion.

The innkeeper stared in bewilderment at his questioner.

"Yes," repeated Chicot, "we want to know what is that creature."

"Why," said mine host, "it is a pullet."

"A pullet!" exclaimed Chicot, with an air of dismay.

"And a Mans pullet at that," continued Bonhomet.

"Now what have you to say?" said Gorenflot, triumphantly.

"What have I to say?" returned Chicot. "Why, that I am apparently in error; but, as I have a real longing to eat of this pullet, and yet would not sin, do me the favor, my brother, in the name of our mutual friendship, to sprinkle a few drops of water on it and christen it carp."

"Oh, really!" protested Brother Gorenflot.

"Do it, I beseech you!" said the Gascon, "do it; you will thereby, perhaps, save me from a mortal sin."

"Well, to save you from a mortal sin — agreed!" said Gorenflot, who, besides being naturally an excellent comrade, had had his spirits elevated a little by his three vinous experiments, "but I don't see any water."

"I know it is written, though I forget where: 'In a case of urgency thou shalt use whatever comes to thy hand; everything is in the intention.' Baptize with wine, my brother, baptize with wine; the creature will not be the worse on that account, though it may be a little less Catholic."

And Chicot filled the monk's glass to the brim. The first bottle was finished.

"In the name of Bacchus, Momus, and Comus, trinity of the great Saint Pantagruel," said Gorenflot, "I baptize thee carp."

And, steeping his finger-tips in the wine, he sprinkled a few drops on the pullet.

"Now," said the Gascon, touching glasses with the monk, "to the health of the newly baptized; may she be roasted to perfection, and may the art of Maître Claude Bonhomet add other priceless qualities to those she has received from nature."

"To his health," said Gorenflot, interrupting a hearty laugh to swallow the Burgundy Chicot poured out for him, "to his health. *Morbleu!* but that's a wine that's up to the mark."

"Maître Claude," said Chicot, "roast me incontinent this carp on the spit, baste it with fresh butter, into which you will shred a little bacon and some shalots; then, when it hath begun to turn a golden brown, slip me into the pan two slices of toast, and serve hot."

Gorenflot spoke not a word, but he looked approbation,

which approbation was confirmed by a certain little motion of the head, peculiar to him.

"And now," said Chicot, when he saw his orders in a fair way of being executed, "sardines, Maître Bonhomet, and some tunny. We are in Lent, as our pious brother has just told us, and only Lenten fare will I touch. So, — stay a moment, — bring on two more bottles of that excellent Romanée, 1561."

The perfumes that arose from the kitchen, one of those kitchens of the south so dear to the true gourmand, were beginning to be diffused around; they gradually mounted to the brain of the monk; his tongue became moist and his eyes shone, but he restrained himself still, and even made a movement to get up.

"So, then," said Chicot, "you leave me thus, and at the very beginning of the battle?"

"I must, my brother," said Gorenflot, lifting up his eyes to heaven to notify God of the sacrifice he was making for His sake.

"But it is terribly imprudent of you to think of preaching when you 're fasting."

"Why?" stammered the monk.

"Because your lungs will fail you, my brother; Gallien has said: *Pulmo hominis facile deficit* — Man's lungs are weak and easily fail."

"Alas! yes," said Gorenflot, "and it has often been my own experience; had I had lungs, I should have been a thunderbolt of eloquence."

"You see I 'm right, then," returned Chicot.

"Luckily," said Gorenflot, falling back on his chair, "luckily, I have zeal."

"Yes, but zeal is not enough; in your place I should try these sardines and drink a few drops of this nectar."

"A single sardine, then," replied Gorenflot, "and just one glass."

Chicot laid a sardine on the brother's plate and passed him the second bottle.

The monk ate the sardine and drank the contents of the glass.

"Well?" asked Chicot, who, while urging the Genevievan to eat and drink, took good care to keep sober himself; "well, how do you feel?"

"The fact is," answered Gorenflot, "I feel a little stronger."

"*Ventre de biche!* when a fellow has a sermon to preach, it is not a question of feeling a little stronger, it's a question of feeling entirely strong, and," continued the Gascon, "in your place, if I wanted to achieve this result I should eat the two fins of this carp; for if you do not eat, your breath is pretty sure to smell of wine. *Merum sobrio male olet.*"

"Ah!" exclaimed Gorenflot, "devil take me if you're not right. I never thought of that."

The pullet was brought in at this very moment. Chicot carved one of the portions he had baptized by the name of fins; the monk ate it, and picked a leg and thigh afterward.

"Christ's body!" he cried, "but this is the delicious fish!"

Chicot cut off another fin and laid it on Gorenflot's plate, he himself toying with a bone.

"And the famous wine," said he, uncorking a third bottle.

Once started, once warmed up, once quickened in the depths of his huge stomach, Gorenflot no longer had the strength to stop; he devoured the wing, made a skeleton of the carcass, and then summoned Bonhomet.

"Maître Claude," said he, "I am very hungry; did you not suggest a certain bacon omelet?"

"Undoubtedly," answered the innkeeper, who never contradicted his customers when their assertions had a tendency to increase the length of their bills.

"Then bring it on, bring it on immediately," said the monk.

"In five minutes," replied the host, who, at a glance from Chicot, left hurriedly to prepare the order.

"Ah!" cried Gorenflot, dropping his enormous fist, which was armed with a fork, on the table, "things are going better now."

"I should think so!" said Chicot.

"And if the omelet were here I'd make only a mouthful of it, just as I swallow this wine at a gulp."

And his liquorish eyes gleamed as he tossed off a quarter of the third bottle.

"Aha!" said Chicot, "so you were ill, my friend?"

"I was a ninny, my brother," returned Gorenflot; "that cursed sermon drove me crazy; I have thought of nothing else for the last three days."

"It must be magnificent?" said Chicot.

"Splendid."

"Tell me about it while we're waiting for the omelet."

"No, no!" cried Gorenflot; "a sermon at table! where did you ever hear of such a thing? at your royal master's court, Mister Jester?"

"Oh, I have heard some very fine discourses at the court of King Henri, whom God preserve!" said Chicot, raising his hat.

"And on what do those discourses turn?" inquired Gorenflot.

"On virtue," said Chicot.

"Oh, yes," cried the monk, throwing himself back in his chair, "he is quite a paragon of virtue, is your King Henri."

"I don't know if he be a paragon or not," rejoined the Gascon; "but what I do know is that I have never seen anything there to bring a blush to my cheeks."

"I believe you; *mordieu!* don't I believe you!" said the monk. "It is a long time since you could blush, you hardened sinner."

"I a sinner! Oh, fie!" said Chicot, "I who am abstinence personified, continence in flesh and bone! I who follow all the processions and observe all the fasts!"

"Yes, the hypocritical processions, the make-believe fasts of your Sardanapalus, your Nebuchadnezzar, your Herodes! Fortunately, we're beginning to know your King Henri by heart. May the devil take him!"

And Gorenflot, in place of the sermon asked for, sang the following song at the top of his voice:

"'The King, to get money, pretends
That he 's poor, as if that made amends
For his shameful abuses.
The hypocrite thinks that his sin
Is effaced when he scourges his skin
And fasts like recluses.

"'But Paris, who knows him too well,
Would far sooner see him in hell
Than lend him a copper.
He filched from her so much before,
That she says: "You pay off the old score,
Or go begging, you pauper!"'"

"Bravo!" cried Chicot, "bravo!"

Then, to himself:

"Good! since he sings, he 'll speak."

At this moment, Maître Bonhomet entered, in one hand the famous omelet, and in the other two fresh bottles.

"Bring it here, bring it here," cried the monk, with sparkling eyes and with a smile so broad that it revealed all his thirty-two teeth.

"But, friend Gorenflot, it seems to me that you have to preach a sermon," said Chicot.

"The sermon is here," said the monk, slapping his forehead, which was already beginning to partake of the ruddy color of his cheeks.

"At half-past nine," continued Chicot.

"I lied," said the monk, — "*omnis homo mendax confiteor.*"

"Well, at what hour is it to take place?"

"At ten."

"At ten? I thought the abbey closed at nine."

"Let it close," said Gorenflot, looking at the candle through the ruby contents of his glass; "let it close, I have a key."

"The key of the abbey!" cried Chicot, "you have the key of the abbey?"

"Here, in my pocket," said Gorenflot, tapping a part of his robe.

"Impossible," answered Chicot, "I know what monastic rules are. I have made retreats in three convents: the key of an abbey is never confided to a mere brother."

"Here it is," said Gorenflot, falling back in his chair, and holding up a coin exultingly before the eyes of Chicot.

"Let me see. Hah! money," sneered Chicot; "you corrupt the brother porter and return at whatever hour you like, you miserable sinner!"

Gorenflot opened his mouth from ear to ear, with that idiotic, good-natured smile peculiar to the drunkard.

"*Sufficit*," he stammered.

And he was hurriedly restoring the coin to his pocket.

"Stay," said Chicot, "hold a moment. Bless my eyes! what a queer coin!"

"With the effigy of the heretic on it," said Gorenflot. "Look — a hole through the heart."

"Yes, I see," answered Chicot, "a tester minted by the Béarn monarch; and the hole is there, too."

"Made by a poniard!" said Gorenflot. "Death to the heretic! Whoever kills the heretic is canonized before his death, and I freely give up my place in paradise to him."

"Oho!" muttered Chicot, "things are beginning to take shape; but the rascal is not yet drunk enough."

And he filled the monk's glass again.

"Yes," cried the Gascon, "death to the heretic! and long live the Mass!"

"Long live the Mass!" said Gorenflot, gulping down the contents of his glass, "death to the heretic, and long live the Mass!"

"So!" said Chicot, who, at sight of the tester in his comrade's enormous hand, remembered the careful examination made by the brother porter of the hands of the monks who had flocked to the abbey porch, "so you show this coin to the brother porter — and" —

"I enter," said Gorenflot.

"Without trouble?"

"As easily as this wine enters my stomach."

And the monk treated himself to a fresh dose of the generous liquid.

"Why, then, if what you say is correct, you have n't to steal in?"

"I steal in!" stammered Gorenflot, now completely intoxicated; "when Gorenflot arrives, the folding-doors are opened wide before him."

"And then you deliver your sermon?"

"And then I deliver my sermon; here is how the thing is managed: I arrive, do you hear? I ar-rive — Chi-cot!"

"I should say I hear; I 'm all ears."

"I arrive, then, as I was telling you. The congregation is numerous and select: there are barons; there are counts; there are dukes."

"And even princes."

"And even princes," repeated the monk; "you 're right — princes, in good earnest. I enter humbly among the faithful of the Union; there is a cry for Brother Gorenflot, and I come forward."

And thereupon the monk rose.

"That 's just it," said Chicot, "you come forward."

"And I come forward," repeated Gorenflot, trying to be as good as his word. But, before he made the first step, he stumbled at a corner of the table and fell in a heap on the floor.

"Bravo!" cried the Gascon, lifting him up and setting him on a chair; "you come forward, you bow to your audience, and say" —

"No, I don't say, it is my friends who say."

"Your friends say what?"

"My friends say: 'Brother Gorenflot! Brother Gorenflot's sermon!' A fine name for a Leaguer is Gorenflot, is n't it?"

And the good monk repeated his name in tones of admiring approval.

"A fine name for a Leaguer," said Chicot to himself; "what truths is the wine in this drunkard going to let out?"

"Then I begin."

And the monk rose to his feet, shutting his eyes because the light hurt them, leaning against the wall because he was dead drunk.

"You begin," said Chicot, propping him against the wall as Paillasse does Harlequin in the pantomime.

"I begin: 'My brethren, this is a fine day for the faith; my brethren, this is a very fine day for the faith; my brethren, this is an exceedingly fine day for the faith.'"

After this superlative, Chicot saw there was nothing more to be got out of the monk; so he let him go.

Brother Gorenflot, who owed his equilibrium solely to the support of Chicot, slipped along the wall like a badly shored plank as soon as that support was withdrawn, hitting the table with his feet as he fell and knocking several empty bottles off it by the shock.

"Amen!" said Chicot.

Almost at that very instant, a snore like unto a roar of thunder shook the window of the narrow apartment.

"Good!" said Chicot, "the pullet's legs are beginning their work. Our friend is in for a good twelve hours' sleep, and I can undress him easily."

Judging there was no time to lose, Chicot loosened the cords of the monk's robe, pulled it off, and, turning Gorenflot over as if he had been a sack of flour, rolled him in the table-cloth, tied a napkin about his head, and, with the monk's frock hid under his cloak, passed into the kitchen.

"Maître Bonhomet," said he, handing the innkeeper a rose noble, "that 's for our supper; and this one is for the supper of my horse, which I commend to your good graces; and this other one, particularly, is donated with the intention that you awake not the worthy Brother Gorenflot, who sleepeth like one of the elect."

"Do not be uneasy, all shall be done as you have requested,

M. Chicot," answered the innkeeper, to show these requests were rendered palatable by what accompanied them.

Trusting to this assurance, Chicot departed, and, being as fleet as a deer and as keen-eyed as a fox, he was soon at the corner of the Rue Saint-Étienne. There, with the Béarn tester clutched firmly in his right hand, he donned the brother's robe, and, at a quarter to ten, took his station, not without a beating heart, at the wicket of the abbey of Sainte-Geneviève.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW CHICOT FOUND IT EASIER TO GET INTO THE ABBEY OF SAINTE GENEVIÈVE THAN TO GET OUT OF IT.

Chicot, before donning the monk's frock, had taken a very useful precaution: it was to increase the width of his shoulders by a clever arrangement of his cloak and of the other garments which his new vestment rendered unnecessary; his beard was of the same color as Gorenflot's, and, although one had been born on the banks of the Saone and the other on those of the Garonne, he had so often mimicked his friend's voice for his own amusement that his imitation of it was now perfection. And, of course, every one knows that the beard and voice are the only things that can be distinguished under the hood of a Capuchin.

The gate was near closing when Chicot arrived, the brother porter only waiting for a few loiterers. The Gascon showed his coin, with its effigy of the King of Béarn pierced through the heart, and was at once admitted. He followed the two monks who went before him, and entered the convent chapel, with which he was well acquainted, having often gone there with the King; for the King had taken the abbey of Sainte Geneviève under his special protection.

The chapel was Roman in style, which is the same as saying that it had been erected in the eleventh century, and that, like all the chapels of that period, its choir was built over a crypt or subterranean church. As a consequence, the choir was eight or ten feet higher than the nave. The entrance to it was by two side staircases, between which was an iron door open-

.ng on a staircase containing the same number of steps as the two others, and leading to the crypt.

In this choir, which rose higher than the altar and the picture of St. Geneviève — attributed to Rosso — suspended above it, were the statues of Cloris and Clotilde.

The chapel was lighted by only three lamps, one hanging from the centre of the choir, the two others in the nave.

This imperfect light gave a greater solemnity to the interior, apparently doubling its proportions, for the imagination has a tendency to magnify objects seen in the shadow.

At first, Chicot found it somewhat difficult to accustom his eyes to the obscurity; to train them, he began counting the monks. There were one hundred and twenty in the nave and twelve in the choir, in all a hundred and thirty-two. The twelve monks in the choir were ranged in a single row before the altar, and seemed to be guarding the tabernacle, like a file of sentinels.

Chicot was glad to discover that he was not the last to join those whom Brother Gorenflot had called the brothers of the Union. Behind him entered three other monks, clad in their ample gray robes, who took their places in front of the line we have compared to a file of sentinels.

A boyish little monk, whom Chicot had not noticed before, and who was doubtless one of the choristers, went round on a tour of inspection to see that every one was at his post; then he spoke to one of the three last arrivals in front of the altar.

"We are one hundred and thirty-six," said the brother addressed, in a strong voice; "it is God's reckoning."

The hundred and twenty monks kneeling in the nave rose immediately and sat down on chairs or in the stalls. Soon the rattling of bolts and bars and hinges announced that the massive doors were being closed.

It was not without some trepidation that Chicot, brave as he was, heard those grating sounds. To give himself time to regain his composure, he went and sat down in the shadow of the pulpit; from there he could easily observe the three monks who seemed to be the most important persons in the assemblage.

Armchairs were brought them, in which they sat with the air of judges; behind them, the twelve monks of the choir stood in a line.

When the tumult occasioned by the shutting of the doors

and the changes in the postures of the monks had ceased, a little bell was rung three times.

It was doubtless the signal for silence; during the first and second tinkling of the bell, there was a prolonged "hush!" during the third, there was not even a whisper.

"Brother Monsoreau!" said the same monk who had already spoken, "what news do you bring from the province of Anjou?"

Two things made Chicot at once prick up his ears.

The first was the speaker's voice; its imperious tones would ring out far more naturally from the visor of a helmet on a field of battle than from the cowl of a monk in a church.

The second was this name of Monsoreau, a name only known a few days before at court, where, as we have seen, it had created some sensation.

A tall monk, whose robe fell about him in angular folds, made his way through the assembly and, with a firm and bold step, entered the pulpit. Chicot tried to get a glimpse of his features. But it was impossible.

"It 's just as well," thought he; "if I cannot see their faces, at least, they can't see mine, either."

"My brothers," said a voice Chicot at once recognized as that of the grand huntsman, "the news from the province of Anjou is not satisfactory; not that we lack sympathizers there, but we do lack representatives. The task of propagating the Union in this province had been confided to Baron de Méridor; but this old man, driven to despair by the recent death of his daughter, has, owing to his sorrow, neglected the affairs of the holy League; until he is consoled for his loss, we need not count on him. As for myself, I bring three new adherents to the association. It is for you to decide whether these new brothers, for whom I answer as for myself, shall be admitted into our holy Union."

A murmur of approbation spread from rank to rank among the monks, and continued even after Brother Monsoreau had taken his seat.

"Brother La Hurière!" cried the same monk who had called on Monsoreau, and who, apparently, summoned such of the faithful as his own caprice suggested, "tell us what you have done in the city of Paris."

A man with his hood down took the place in the pulpit vacated by M. de Monsoreau.

"Brothers, you all know," said he, "whether I am devoted to the Catholic faith or not, and what proofs I gave of my devotion on the great day when it triumphed. Yes, my brothers, at that period I am proud to say I was one of the followers of our great Henri de Guise, and it was from the very mouth of M. de Besme himself, whom God reward, that I received the orders he deigned to give me, — orders I have obeyed so faithfully that I wanted to kill my own lodgers. Now my devotion to our holy cause has won me the post of leader of my district, and I venture to say that this will redound to the advantage of religion. I have been able to take note of all the heretics in the quarter of Saint-Germain-L'Auxerrois, where, in the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, I still keep the Hôtel de la Belle-Étoile, a hotel always at your service, my brothers; and, when I took note of them, I pointed them out to our friends. Certainly, I no longer thirst for the blood of the Huguenots as I did once, but I cannot disguise from myself the true object of the holy Union we are about to found."

"This is worth listening to," said Chicot to himself. "La Hurière, if I remember aright, was a terrible heretic-killer and must have all the League's secrets at his fingers' ends, if these gentry are guided in their revelations by the merits of their confidants."

"Speak! go on!" cried several voices.

La Hurière, having now an opportunity to display his oratorical powers, such as did not come to him often, although his faith in them was profound, paused to collect his thoughts, coughed, and resumed:

"If I be not mistaken, my brothers, the extinction of individual heretics is not our chief object at present; the great aim of all good Frenchmen is to be assured that they shall not find heretics among the princes entitled by birth to govern them. Now, my brothers, what is our present position? Francis II., who was zealous, died without children; Charles IX., who was zealous, died without children; Henri III., whose acts and beliefs it is not for me to investigate, will probably die without children; then there remains the Duc d'Anjou, who has no children, either, and seems to be lukewarm toward the holy League" —

Here the orator was interrupted by several voices, among which was heard that of the grand huntsman.

"Why lukewarm?" it said, "and what ground have you for this accusation against the prince?"

"I say lukewarm because he has not yet given in his adhesion to the League, although the illustrious brother who has just spoken promised it positively in his name."

"Who told you he has not done so," the speaker went on, "since there are new adherents? You have no right, in my opinion, to suspect any one, as long as the report is not made."

"You are right," answered La Hurière, "and I will wait a while longer; but, after the Duc d'Anjou, who is mortal and belongs to a family whose members, you must have noticed, die young, to whom will the crown fall? To the most ferocious of Huguenots, to a renegade, an apostate, to a Nebuchadnezzar."

Here, not murmurs, but frantic applause, interrupted La Hurière.

"To Henri de Béarn, in short, against whom this association is principally directed; to Henri de Béarn, generally supposed to be at Pau or Tarbes among his mistresses, but who is really to be met with here in Paris."

"In Paris!" cried several voices; "in Paris! oh, that is impossible."

"He was here!" said La Hurière. "He was here on the night Madame de Sauves was assassinated, and, very likely, he is here at this moment."

"Death to the Béarnais!" shouted several voices.

"Yes, death to the Béarnais!" cried La Hurière, "and, if by any chance, he should happen to put up at the Belle-Étoile, I'll answer for him: but he will not come. You do not catch a fox twice in the same hole. He will lodge elsewhere, with some friend, for he has friends, the heretic! Now, it is important to make short work of these friends or, at least, to know them. Our Union is holy, our League loyal, consecrated, blessed, and encouraged by our Holy Father Gregory XIII. I ask, then, that there be no longer any mystery made about it. I ask that lists be handed to the leaders in the different districts, and that these leaders go from house to house and invite all good citizens to sign them. Those who sign will be regarded as our friends; those who refuse to sign, as our enemies, and, when the need of a second Saint-Barthélemy — and it seems more urgent every day — arises, we will do what we did in the first one — we will spare God the labor of separating the good from the wicked."

The thunders of applause that followed this peroration lasted several minutes. At length there was silence, and the grave voice of the monk who had already spoken several times was heard saying:

"The proposition of Brother La Hurière, whom the holy Union thanks for his zeal, will be taken into consideration and discussed by the superior council."

The shouts of acclamation grew more vehement than ever; La Hurière bowed his acknowledgments repeatedly to the assembly, and then, coming down from the pulpit, went to his seat, almost crushed by the weight of his triumph.

"Aha!" murmured Chicot, "I think I am beginning to see. There are people who believe my son Henri is not as zealous a Catholic as was his brother Charles and as are the Guises, and so these same Guises are forming a little party which will be wholly under their hands. Thus, the great Henri, who is a general, will have the army; the fat Mayenne will have the citizens; and the illustrious cardinal will have the church; and, one fine morning, my poor son Henri will find he has nothing except his rosary, which they will politely invite him to take with him into some monastery or other. A capital plan, by Jupiter! But then, there is the Duc d'Anjou! — What the devil will they do with the Duc d'Anjou?"

"Brother Gorenflot!" said the voice of the monk who had already called upon the grand huntsman and La Hurière.

Whether because he was absorbed in the reflections we have just outlined for our readers, or because he was not yet accustomed to answer to the name which he had donned along with the frock of the begging friar, Chicot made no answer.

"Brother Gorenflot!" repeated the voice of the little monk, a voice so clear and shrill that it startled Chicot.

"Oho!" murmured Chicot, "I had almost thought a woman's voice was calling Brother Gorenflot. Would it be that in this honorable assembly not only ranks but sexes are confounded?"

"Brother Gorenflot," cried the same feminine voice again, "are you not present, then?"

"Ah!" whispered Chicot to himself, "I see it; I'm Brother Gorenflot. Well, so be it."

Then, aloud:

"Yes, yes, here I am," said he, counterfeiting the monk's nasal tones, "here I am. In such profound meditation did

the discourse of our brother La Hurière plunge me that I did not hear my name when called."

Several murmurs of approbation, evoked by the recollection of La Hurière's thrilling oration, arose and gave Chicot time to make some preparation for the ordeal he had to face.

Chicot, it may be said, might not have answered to the name of Gorenflot, since every hood was lowered. But it must be remembered that the number of those present was counted, and if, after an inspection, it was discovered that a man believed to be present was really absent, the situation of Chicot would have been serious indeed.

Chicot did not hesitate for an instant. He arose, assumed an air of great consequence, and slowly ascended the steps of the pulpit, meanwhile drawing his cowl down over his face as low as he could.

"Brethren," said he, in a voice that exactly resembled that of Brother Gorenflot, "I am the brother collector of this convent, and, as you know, this office gives me the right to enter every dwelling. It is a right of which I avail myself for God's service.

"Brethren," he continued, suddenly recalling the monk's exordium, which had been so unexpectedly interrupted by the slumber brought on by his too copious potations, — a slumber in whose potent clasp he still lay helpless, "brethren, the day that has drawn us all together here is a fine day for the faith. Let us speak frankly, my brethren, since we are in the house of the Lord.

"What is the kingdom of France? A body. Saint Augustine has said: '*Omnis civitas corpus est*': 'Every state is a body.' Upon what does the salvation of a body depend? Upon good health. How is the health of the body preserved? By prudent bleedings when it suffers from a plethora of strength. Now, it is evident that the enemies of the Catholic religion are too strong, since we are afraid of them; therefore we must again bleed that great body called Society. I am but repeating what is said to me every day by the faithful who supply me with eggs, hams, and money for my convent."

The first part of Chicot's discourse evidently made a lively impression upon his audience.

He paused until the murmurs of approval produced by his eloquence had died away, and then resumed:

"It may, perhaps, be objected that the Church abhors blood.

Ecclesia abhorret a sanguine. But mark this well, my dear brethren: the theologian does not say what kind of blood it is the Church holds in horror, and I am ready to bet an egg against an ox that, at any rate, he was not thinking of the blood of heretics when he spoke. For, just listen to this: *Fons malus corruptorum sanguis, hereticorum autem pessimus!* And then, another argument, my brethren: I mentioned the Church! But we are something beside the Church. Brother Monsoreau, who spoke so eloquently a few minutes ago, still keeps, I have n't a doubt about it, his grand huntsman's knife in his belt. Brother La Hurière can handle a spit with the greatest dexterity: *Veru agreste, lethiferum tamen instrumentum.* And I, too, my brethren, I who am now addressing you, I, even I, Jacques Népomucène Gorenflot, have shouldered a musket in Champagne and have roasted a Huguenot in my time. That would have been honor enough for me, and would have sufficed to gain Paradise, were it not that during that period I did other things that in the eyes of my confessor rather took from the merit of my act, and so I hastened to enter a monastery."

At this point Chicot was again applauded. He bowed modestly and continued:

"And now it remains for me to speak of the chiefs we have chosen. Certainly, it is very fine of you, and very prudent especially, to come here at night in monks' robes for the purpose of hearing Brother Gorenflot preach. But it seems to me that the duties of our great representatives ought not to stop at that. Such extreme prudence would but excite the mockery of those infernal Huguenots, who, it must be admitted, are the very devil at cutting and thrusting. I demand, then, that we assume an attitude more worthy of the brave men we are, or, at least, wish to appear. What is our object? The extinction of heresy — why there is nothing to prevent us from crying that from the housetops, as far as I can see. Why should we not march, then, through Paris as a holy procession, with heads erect and our halberds in our hands, instead of assembling like night-thieves who look around every corner to see if the watch be on their track? But you are, perhaps, asking, Who is the man that will set the example? Why, I myself! I, Jacques Népomucène Gorenflot, an unworthy brother of the Order of St. Geneviève, the humble collector of my convent, — I am ready, if need be, with a coat

of mail on my back, helm on head, and musket on shoulder, to march at the head of all good Catholics who desire to follow me, and this I will do, were it only to call a blush to the cheeks of leaders who, when defending the Church, hide in the dark as if she were some wanton whose quarrel they had espoused."

As Chicot's peroration was in harmony with the sentiments of many members of the League, who saw no surer way of attaining their object than by another Saint-Barthélemy, like the one that had occurred six years before, and who were driven to desperation by the slowness of their chiefs, his words aroused general enthusiasm, and all, except the three monks in front, cried out: "Long live the Mass! Hurrah for Brother Gorenflot! The procession! the procession!"

The enthusiasm was the more intense because it was the first time the worthy brother's zeal had been manifested in this fashion. Up to now his friends had no doubt ranked him among the zealous, but among that class of zealous people who are kept within the bounds of prudence by the instinct of self-preservation. And now, here was our brother Gorenflot armed for war and bounding into the full glare of the arena! It excited as much astonishment as admiration, and some, in their delight at such an unexpected transformation, were willing to place Brother Gorenflot, who had preached the first procession, on a level with Peter the Hermit, who had preached the First Crusade.

Luckily or unluckily for the originator of all this excitement, it did not chime in with the policy of the leaders to let him run his course. One of the three silent monks whispered to the little monk, and the lad's silvery voice immediately resounded under the vaults, crying:

"My brothers, it is time to retire; the sitting is over."

The monks rose, muttering that at the next meeting they would insist unanimously on the adoption of the proposal for a procession brought forward by worthy Brother Gorenflot, and made their way slowly to the door. Many of them approached the pulpit and congratulated the monk on his marvellous success; but Chicot, reflecting that his voice, which, in spite of him, always retained a slight Gascon flavor, might be recognized if heard too near, and that his body, being, when viewed vertically, six or eight inches taller than Brother Gorenflot's, might also, if seen too near, arouse the astonish

ment of the observer, however much inclined to believe the moral expansion of the preacher had elevated his physical proportions, — Chicot, we say, fell upon his knees, and, like Samuel, seemed absorbed in a confidential conversation with the Lord.

His ecstasy was respected, and Chicot looked on at the exit of the monks from beneath his cowl, in which he had made holes for his eyes, with the greatest satisfaction.

And yet Chicot had very nearly failed in his object. It was the sight of the Duc de Mayenne that had induced him to leave Henri III. without even asking permission. It was the sight of Nicolas David that had made him return to Paris. Chicot, as we have said, had taken a double vow of vengeance; but he was too much of a nobody to think of attacking a prince of the house of Lorraine, at least without waiting long and patiently for the opportunity of doing so with safety. This was not the case with Nicolas David, who was a mere Norman lawyer; a crafty knave, though, who had been a soldier before being an attorney, and fencing-master in his regiment as well. Still, Chicot, even if not a fencing-master, had an idea that he did not handle the rapier badly; his great aim, then, was to come to close quarters with his enemy, when, like the doughty knights of old, he would trust in the justice of his cause and in his good sword.

Chicot examined all the monks closely, as they filed out after each other, hoping to detect, if it might be, under frock and cowl the lank, slender figure of Maître Nicolas, when he suddenly perceived that each monk was submitted to the same examination on leaving as on entering, and was only allowed to depart when he had taken a certain token from his pocket and showed it the brother porter. Chicot at first thought he must be mistaken, and remained a moment in doubt; but this doubt was soon changed into a certainty that made his hair stand on end with terror.

Brother Gorenflot had shown him the token that would enable him to enter, but had forgotten to show him the token that would let him out.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW CHICOT SAW AND HEARD THINGS VERY DANGEROUS TO SEE AND HEAR.

Chicot came down from the pulpit hurriedly; he wanted to discover, if he could, the token that would enable him to get out into the street, and to obtain possession of it, if there was yet time. By mingling with the monks that still loitered behind, and peeping over their shoulders, he learned that this token was a star-shaped denier.

Our Gascon had a fair collection of deniers in his pocket, but, unfortunately, none of this peculiar form — a form the more peculiar that it destroyed forever the value of the coin as a circulating medium.

Chicot saw the situation at a glance. If he went to the door and did not produce the token, he was recognized to be an impostor. Nor would the investigation end with this: he would be found out to be Chicot, the King's jester, and although his office gave him many privileges in the Louvre and in the other royal castles, it would lose much of its prestige in the abbey of St. Genevieve, especially in the present circumstances. In fact, Maître Chicot saw that he was in a trap; he took refuge in the shadow of a pillar and crouched down in an angle made by a confession box with this pillar.

"To make things worse," said Chicot to himself, "my ruin will involve the ruin of that ninny of a king of mine, whom I am silly enough to be fond of, although I like to rap him over the knuckles occasionally. If I were n't a fool, I should be now in the hostelry of the *Corne d'Abondance*, enjoying myself with Brother Gorenflot; but no use wishing for impossibilities now."

And while thus addressing himself, that is to say, addressing the party who had most interest in keeping his words from unfriendly ears, he made himself as small as possible in the position he had taken.

Then the voice of the young chorister was heard from the court-yard, crying:

"Is every one out? We are going to shut the doors."

There was no answer. Chicot craned his neck, and saw

that the chapel was entirely empty except for the three monks who were seated on benches brought from the middle of the choir.

"Well," thought Chicot, "as long as they do not close the windows, things may go to my satisfaction."

"Let us go over the building," said the chorister to the brother porter.

"The devil!" said Chicot, "if I had that little monk by the neck, I would n't do a thing to him, oh no!"

The brother porter lit a taper and, followed by the chorister, began making the tour of the church.

There was not a moment to be lost. The brother porter would pass with his taper within four steps of Chicot, who could not fail to be discovered.

Chicot turned nimbly round the pillar, contriving to keep within the moving shadow; then he opened the door of the confessional, which was shut only by a latch, and slipped in, closing the door after him.

The brother porter and the monk passed within four paces of him, and he could see through the grating the light of the taper reflected on their robes.

"Unless the very devil 's in it," thought Chicot, "that brother porter and the little monk and yon three monks won't stay here forever. When they 're out, I 'll pile the chairs on the benches, like Pelion on Ossa, as M. Ronsard would say, and I 'll make my way out through the window."

"Ah, yes, through the window," continued Chicot, answering a question he had put to himself, "but when I 'm through the window I shall find myself in the yard, and the yard is not the street. I think, after all, it may be better for me to spend the night in the confessional. Gorenflot's robe is warm; it will not be as pagan a night as many I have passed, and so that much, at least, is gained for my salvation."

"Put out the lamps," said the chorister, "so that those outside may see the conference is at an end."

The brother porter, with the help of an immense extinguisher, immediately extinguished the light of the two lamps in the nave, plunging it into funeral darkness. Next he did the same to the one in the choir.

The church was now in total obscurity, except for the pale rays of a wintry moon that barely succeeded in piercing the stained-glass windows.

Then, with the cessation of the light, came utter silence.

The bell rang out twelve times.

"*Ventre de biche!*" said Chicot, "midnight in a church! If my son Harry were in my place, would n't he be in a flutter! Luckily we are so constituted that shadows don't frighten us. So good-night, friend Chicot, and a good rest to you!"

And, with this comforting wish addressed to himself, Chicot settled down with as much ease as he could in the confessional, shoved in the little bolt on the inside, to be more private, and shut his eyes.

He was in this situation about ten minutes, and his mind, assailed by the first misty visions of slumber, was half conscious of a crowd of indefinite forms floating in that mysterious atmosphere which forms the twilight of thought, when three loud strokes on a copper gong pealed through the church, and then died away in its recesses.

"Odzookens!" mumbled Chicot, opening his eyes and pricking up his ears, "now, what may this mean?"

At the same moment the lamp in the choir was relit, burning with a bluish flame, and in its reflection appeared the same three monks, seated in the same place and as motionless as ever.

Chicot was not entirely exempt from superstition. Brave as our Gascon was, he belonged to his age, and it was an age of weird traditions and terrible legends.

He crossed himself gently and murmured:

"*Vade retro, Satanas!*"

But as the light did not go out in obedience to the sign of our redemption, as it would most assuredly have done if it had been of an infernal character, and as the three monks stood their ground in spite of the "*vade retro*," the Gascon began to believe that the light might be natural, and the monks, if not real monks, at least beings of flesh and blood.

Still, what between his sudden awakening and his real alarm, Chicot was not himself for a time. And, at this very moment, a flagstone in the choir slowly rose until it stood on end, and a gray cowl appeared in the dark opening, and next, an entire monk stepped out on the floor, while the flagstone sank into its place behind him.

At this spectacle Chicot lost all confidence in himself. He no longer had any faith in the exorcism he had used before. He was simply frightened out of his wits, and for a moment

he dreaded that all the priors, abbots, and deans of St. Geneviève, from Optaf, who died in 533, to Pierre Boudin, the predecessor of the present superior, were about to leave their tombs in the crypt which formerly contained the relics of Sainte Geneviève, and, following the example already given them, to raise with their bony skulls the flagstones of the choir.

But this state of mind was not to last long.

"Brother Monsoreau," said one of the three monks to the individual who had made his appearance in such singular fashion, "has the person we are waiting for come?"

"Yes, messeigneurs," replied the monk spoken to, "he is outside."

"Open the door and let him enter."

"Aha," said Chicot, "so the comedy has two acts, and I only saw the first. Two acts! I hope to see a third."

But though Chicot tried to keep up his courage by joking with himself, he did not feel at all easy, and a cold shiver now and then darted through his veins.

Meanwhile Brother Monsoreau descended one of the stairs that led from the nave to the choir, and opened the bronze door between the two staircases by which the crypt was entered.

At the same time, the monk sitting between the two others lowered his hood, and showed the great scar, that noble sign by which the Catholics so enthusiastically used to recognize their hero, who was soon to become their martyr.

"The great Henri de Guise in person, the very individual his Most Besotted Majesty believes busy with the siege of La Charité! Ah, now I understand it all!" said Chicot; "the man on the right, who blessed the assembly, is the Cardinal de Lorraine, and the one on the left, who spoke to that brat of a chorister, is my friend Monseigneur de Mayenne. But where in the mischief is Maître Nicolas David?"

As if to give immediate proof of the soundness of Chicot's conclusions, the monks on the right and left lowered their cowls, and disclosed to view the intellectual features, broad forehead, and piercing eyes of the famous cardinal and the very commonplace visage of the Duc de Mayenne.

"Ha! Now I recognize you," said Chicot, — "a trinity rather unholy, but perfectly visible, and I am all eyes and ears, to see what you are going to do and hear what you are going to say."

At this moment M. de Monsoreau reached the iron door of the crypt, which gave way before him.

"Did you think he would come?" said the Balafré to his brother the cardinal.

"Not only did I think it, but I was so sure of it," said the latter, "that I have under my robe the very thing that is needed to take the place of the ampulla."

And Chicot, who was near enough the trinity, as he called them, to hear and see everything, perceived by the feeble light of the choir lamp a silver gilt, richly chased casket.

"Why, upon my faith," muttered Chicot, "it looks as if some one were going to be crowned. Now, as I have always longed to see a coronation, this will suit me exactly!"

Meanwhile, about a score of monks, with their heads buried in their enormous cowls, had entered by the door of the crypt and taken their stations in the nave.

They were followed by another monk, attended by M. de Monsoreau, who went up the choir staircase and occupied a position on the right of the Guises, standing on one of the steps of a stall.

The young chorister reappeared, went to the monk on the right, received his orders with an air of great respect, and then vanished.

The Duc de Guise's eyes wandered over this assembly, not one-sixth as numerous as the first, and, therefore, very likely to be a select body. Perceiving that they were not only attentive, but eager to hear him, he said:

"My friends, time is precious, and so I will go straight to the point. As I presume you all formed part of the first assembly, you must have heard the complaints of some members of the Catholic League, who accuse several of our leaders of coldness and even of ill-will, among others, the prince who is nearest to the throne. The moment has come to render to this prince the respect and justice we owe him. You will hear himself speak, and then those of you who have at heart the attainment of the principal object of the holy League can judge whether your chiefs deserve the imputation of coldness and apathy made by Brother Gorenflot, a member of our Union, but whom we have not deemed it prudent to admit into our secret."

When from his confessional Chicot heard the name of the warlike Genevievan uttered by the Duc de Guise in a tone

that denoted anything but friendliness, he could not help giving way to an inward fit of laughter, which, although silent, was certainly out of place, considering the great personages who were its object.

"Brothers," continued the duke, "the prince whose coöperation had been promised us, the prince whose aid, nay, whose mere assent, we scarcely dared to hope for, the prince, my brothers, is here."

All eyes were turned inquisitively on the monk to the right of the three Lorraine princes, who were all standing on the step of the stall.

"Monseigneur," said the Duc de Guise, addressing the personage who had now become the object of general attention, "the will of God seems to me manifest, for the fact that you have consented to join us proves that we are right in doing what we are doing. And now let me beseech your Highness to lower your hood, that your faithful followers may see with their own eyes you keep the promise we have given in your name, a promise so welcome that they hardly dared to hope for it."

The mysterious individual addressed by Henri de Guise raised his hand and flung his cowl back on his shoulders, and Chicot, who had expected to discover under a monk's frock some Lorraine prince hitherto unknown to him, was amazed on seeing the Duc d'Anjou, with a face so pale that, by the dim light of the sepulchral lamp, it looked as if it belonged to a marble statue.

"Oho!" said Chicot to himself, "our brother Anjou! So he will never have done staking the heads of others for a throne!"

"Long live Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou!" shouted the assembly.

François became even paler than he was before.

"Do not be alarmed, monseigneur," said Henri de Guise, "our chapel is deaf and its doors are well closed."

"A lucky precaution," thought Chicot.

"My brothers," said the Comte de Monsoreau, "his Highness wishes to address a few words to the meeting."

"Yes, yes, let him speak," cried every voice; "we are listening."

The three Lorraine princes turned round and bowed to the Duc d'Anjou. The Duc d'Anjou leaned against one of the arms of the stall; he seemed to be almost fainting.

"Gentlemen," said he, in a hollow voice that trembled to such a degree that his first words could barely be heard, "gentlemen, I believe that God, who often appears insensible and deaf to the affairs of this world, has, on the contrary, his piercing eyes always riveted on us and remains apparently dumb and careless, that he may remedy one day by some mighty stroke the disorders occasioned by the insane ambitions of men."

The beginning of the duke's speech was, like his character, somewhat obscure; so his hearers waited for a little light to descend on his Highness' thoughts before condemning or applauding them.

The duke resumed, in a somewhat firmer voice:

"I, too, have cast my eyes on this world, and being able to embrace but a small portion of its surface in my limited survey, I have concentrated my gaze on France. And what, pray, have I beheld in this kingdom? The holy religion of Christ shaken on its august foundations, and the true servants of God scattered and proscribed. Next, I have sounded the depths of the abyss opened for the last twenty years by heresies that undermine the faith under the pretence of getting nearer to God, and my soul, like that of the prophet, has been flooded with sorrows."

A murmur of approval ran through the assembly. The prince had manifested his sympathy for the sufferings of the Church; it was almost a declaration of war against those who made the Church suffer.

"In the midst of my profound affliction," went on the duke, "the news was brought me that several pious and noble gentlemen, devoted to the customs of our ancestors, were trying to steady the tottering altar. It seemed to me, as I looked around, that I was already present at the last judgment, and that God had separated the reprobate and the elect. On one side were the former, and I recoiled from them with horror; on the other were the elect, and I have come to throw myself into their arms. My brothers, I am here."

"Amen!" said Chicot, but in a tone not above a whisper.

However, Chicot's caution was unnecessary; he might have answered in his loudest tones, and his voice would not have been heard amid the applause and the bravos that shook the vaults of the chapel.

The three Lorraine princes, who had given the signal for the

acclamations, waited until they ceased; then the cardinal, who was nearest the duke, advanced a step toward him and said:

"You have come amongst us of your own free will, prince?"

"Of my own free will, monsieur."

"Who instructed you in the holy mystery?"

"My friend the Comte de Monsoreau, a man zealous for religion."

"And now," said the Duc de Guise in his turn, "now that your Highness is one of us, deign, monseigneur, to tell us what you intend doing for the good of the holy League."

"I intend to serve the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion in everything in which she needs my services," was the neophyte's answer.

"*Ventre de biche!*" thought Chicot, "these, upon my soul, are very asinine folk to think they must say things like that in the dark! Why don't they lay their proposals before King Henri III., my illustrious master? Why, all this would suit him to a shade. Processions, flagellations, extirpations of heresy, as in Rome, fagots and *autos-da-fè*, as in Flanders and Spain, — why, he looks on them all as the only means of giving him children, does our good prince. *Corbœuf!* I should n't mind getting out of my confessional and making a speech myself, so deeply have I been touched by that dear Duc d'Anjou's twaddle. Continue, worthy brother of his Majesty; noble fool, go on!"

And the Duc d'Anjou, as if inspired by the jester's encouragement, went on:

"But," said he, "the interests of religion should not be the sole aim which you gentlemen propose to attain. As for me, I see another."

"Egad!" muttered Chicot, "I am a gentlemen too; this ought to have as much interest for me as for the others; go on, Anjou, go on."

"Monseigneur," said the cardinal, "we are listening to your Highness with the most serious attention."

"And our hearts beat hopefully in listening to you," said M. de Mayenne.

"Then I will explain," said the Duc d'Anjou, at the same time trying to pierce the dark recesses of the chapel with his uneasy glances, as if to be certain his words would fall only on ears worthy such confidence.

M. de Monsoreau knew the cause of the prince's anxiety,

and reassured him by a significant look, accompanied by a significant smile.

"Now, when a gentleman thinks of what he owes to God," continued the duke, involuntarily lowering his voice, "he thinks, at the same time, of his" —

"*Parbleu!*" breathed Chicot, "of his king, that's well known."

"Of his country," said the Duc d'Anjou, "and he asks himself does his country really enjoy all the honor and all the prosperity that should fall to her lot; for every honorable gentleman is indebted for the advantages he possesses to God, in the first place, but, in the second, to the country whose child he is."

The assembly broke out into violent applause.

"Ah! but then, what about the King?" whispered Chicot. "So this poor monarch of ours is no longer worth talking about? And I who used to believe, as it is written on the pyramid of Juvisy, that the king and the ladies come next after God!"

"I ask myself, then," pursued the Duc d'Anjou, whose prominent cheek-bones gradually took on a tinge of red, owing to his feverish excitement, "I ask myself whether my country enjoys the peace and happiness that the sweet and lovely land which answers to the name of France deserves, and to my grief I see that she is far indeed from enjoying them.

"In fact, my brothers, the state is torn asunder by different wills and tastes, one as powerful as another, and this is owing to the feebleness of that superior will which forgets that it is its duty to govern for the welfare of its subjects, or never remembers that royal duty except capriciously and at long intervals, and then at the wrong time, so that even its acts of energy only work evil; it is no doubt either to the fatal destiny of France or to the blindness of her chief that we must attribute her misfortunes. But whether we are ignorant of their true source or only suspect it, her misfortunes are not the less real. As for myself, I make the false friends of the King rather than the King himself responsible for the crimes and iniquities committed against religion. In any case, gentlemen, I feel bound, as a servant of the altar and the throne, to unite with those who seek by all means the extinction of heresy and the downfall of perfidious counsellors.

"And now, gentlemen, you know what I intended to do for the League when I became your associate."

"Oh!" murmured Chicot, struck all of a heap with wonder, "I think I can detect the earmarks of the conspiracy, and they are not the ears of an ass, either, as I had at first supposed, they are a fox's."

The speech of the Duc d'Anjou, which may have appeared a little long to our readers, separated as they are by three centuries from the politics of that period, had such deep interest for his hearers that most of them had come close up to the prince, so as not to lose a syllable of a discourse uttered in a voice that grew more and more faint according as the meaning grew more and more clear.

The scene was then a curious one. The twenty-five or thirty persons present, after they had thrown back their cowls, displayed, under the dim light of the solitary lamp, faces that were noble, keen, daring, and alive with curiosity.

Masses of shadow filled all the other parts of the building, which seemed to stand apart from the drama that was being acted at one single point.

The pale face of the Duc d'Anjou was a striking feature in the midst of this assembly, with his deep sunken eyes and a mouth that, when it opened, seemed distorted by the sinister grin of a death's head.

"Monseigneur," said the Duc de Guise, "while thanking you for the words you have just spoken, I think it right to inform you that you are surrounded by men not only devoted to the principles you profess, but to the person of your Royal Highness as well, and, if you doubted the truth of my statement, the close of the session would bring it home to you with irresistible force."

The Duc d'Anjou bowed and, as he raised his head, threw an anxious glance over the assembly.

"If I am not greatly mistaken," murmured Chicot, "all we have seen so far is but a preliminary, and something is going to take place of more importance than the humbug and twaddle we have seen and heard so far."

"Monseigneur," said the cardinal, who had noticed the prince's uneasy look, "if your Highness felt any alarm, the mere names of those around you would suffice to reassure you. They are the Governor of Aunis, M. d'Antraguet, Junior, M. de Ribeirac, and M. de Livarot, gentlemen, perhaps, known to

your Highness, and who are as brave as they are loyal. Then we have the Vidame de Castillon, the Baron de Lusignan, M. Cruce, and M. Leclerc, all equally admirers of the wisdom of your Royal Highness and all ready to march under your guidance for the emancipation of religion and the throne. We shall receive with gratitude the orders your Royal Highness will deign to give us."

The Duc d'Anjou could not repress a movement of pride. These Guises, whose haughty heads could never be forced to bend, now spoke of obeying.

The Duc de Mayenne spoke next.

"You are, by your birth," said he, "and because of your sagacity, monseigneur, the natural chief of the holy Union, and it is from you we must learn what ought to be our course with regard to those false friends of the King about whom we lately spoke."

"Nothing more simple," answered the prince, with that feverish excitement which in feeble natures supplies the place of courage; "when parasitic and poisonous plants grow in a field which, but for them, would produce a rich harvest, these dangerous weeds must be torn from the soil. The King is surrounded, not by friends, but by courtiers who are ruining him and who arouse continual scandal in France and throughout Christendom."

"It is true," said the Duc de Guise, in a gloomy voice.

"And moreover," rejoined the cardinal, "these courtiers prevent us, the true friends of his Majesty, from approaching him, as our birth and the offices we hold give us the right of doing."

"Oh," said the Duc de Mayenne, bluntly, "let us leave to common Leaguers, such as those present at our first meeting, the task of serving God. By serving God they will serve those who speak to them of God. But let us attend to our own business. Certain men are in our way; they defy and insult us, and are constantly showing their contempt for the prince whom we especially honor, and who is our leader."

At this the Duc d'Anjou's face flushed.

"Let us destroy," continued Mayenne, "let us destroy, to the very last among them, this infernal brood of rascals whom the King enriches with the fragments of our fortunes, and let each of us undertake to cut off one of them from the land of the living. We are thirty here; let us count."

"Your proposal is a wise one," said the Duc d'Anjou, "and your part of the work has already been accomplished, M. de Mayenne."

"What is done does not count," said Mayenne.

"We must have some part in the business, however, monseigneur," said D'Entragues. "I take Quélus for my share."

"And I Maugiron," said Livarot.

"And I Schomberg," said Ribeirac.

"Nothing could be better!" assented the Duc d'Anjou, "and we still have Bussy, my brave Bussy; he's pretty sure to give a good account of some of them."

"And we, too; we, too!" cried the rest of the Leaguers.

M. de Monsoreau advanced.

"Aha," muttered Chicot, who, seeing the turn things were taking, no longer felt any inclination to laugh; "so the grand huntsman is going to claim his share in the quarry also!"

Chicot was mistaken.

"Gentlemen," said Monsoreau, stretching out his hand, "I ask you to be silent for a moment. We are determined men, and yet we are afraid to open our hearts to one another. We are intelligent men, and yet we balk at childish scruples.

"Come, now, gentlemen, let us have a little courage, a little boldness, a little frankness. The question before us is not the conduct of the King's minions, the question before us is not the difficulty of approaching his royal person."

"Ah! we're coming to it," thought Chicot, straining his eyes and turning his hands into an ear-trumpet, so as not to lose a word of the harangue. "Well, go on, Monsoreau; make haste, I'm waiting."

"What we really complain of," resumed the count, "is that we are placed in an impossible situation. The kind of royalty under which we live is not acceptable to the French nobility: litanies, despotism, impotence, orgies, a prodigal expenditure on amusements that make us the laughing-stock of Europe, and, with that, the utmost penuriousness in all that concerns the arts or war. The conduct to which I refer is not simply the result of ignorance or weakness, gentlemen, it is the result of insanity."

The grand huntsman's words were received with deathlike silence. The impression made was the deeper because every one had often said in a whisper what he heard now spoken aloud, and was startled, as if by the echo of his own voice, and

shuddered at the thought that he was on all points in unison with the speaker.

M. de Monsoreau, who knew well that this silence was a mark of unanimous approval, continued:

"Must we live under an idle, slothful, foolish king at the very moment when Spain is lighting her stakes, at the very moment when the old heresiarchs of Germany are waking from their slumbers in the shadow of her cloisters, at the very moment when England, acting according to her inflexible political system, is cutting off heads and ideas at the same time? Every nation is working gloriously for the attainment of some object. We, we, I say, are asleep. Gentlemen, pardon me for saying before a great prince, who will, perhaps, blame my temerity, being naturally prejudiced by family feeling, that for four years we have been governed, not by a king, but by a monk."

At these words, the explosion, so skilfully prepared and so skilfully held in check by the leaders during the last hour, burst with such violence that no one would have now recognized in those fanatic enthusiasts the cool and wily politicians of the former scene.

"Down with Valois!" they shouted. "Down with Brother Henri! Give us a prince who is a gentleman; a king who is a knight; a tyrant, if it must be, but not a shaveling!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said the Duc d'Anjou, hypocritically, "let me plead for my brother, who deceives himself, or rather, who is deceived. Let me hope, gentlemen, that our judicious remonstrances, that the efficacious intervention of the power of the League, will lead him back into the right path."

"Hiss, serpent, hiss," muttered Chicot.

"Monseigneur," answered the Duc de Guise, "your Highness has heard, perhaps a little too soon, but, at all events, you *have* heard, the sincere expression of the meaning of our association. No, the object of this meeting is not a league against the Béarnais, who is a mere bugbear to frighten fools with, nor is it to take care of the Church, which is perfectly able to take care of herself; our object is the rescue of the French nobility from their present abject position. Too long have we been held back by the respect with which your Highness inspires us; too long has our knowledge of the love you feel for your family compelled us to dissemble our intentions. But all is now revealed, and your Highness is about to witness a

genuine session of the League, to which the former one was but introductory."

"What do you mean, M. le Duc?" asked the prince, his heart beating at once with alarm and ambition.

"Monseigneur," continued the Duc de Guise, "we have met, not, — as M. de Monsoreau has judiciously remarked, — not for the purpose of discussing worn-out theories, but for effective action. To-day we have chosen as our chief a prince capable of honoring and enriching the nobility of France; and, as it was the custom of the ancient Franks, when they elected a leader, to offer that leader a present worthy of him, so we, too, offer a present to our chosen leader."

Every heart beat, but none so furiously as that of the Duc d'Anjou.

However, he remained mute and impassive; his paleness alone betrayed his emotion.

"Gentlemen," the speaker went on, taking from the bench behind him a rather heavy object and raising it in both his hands, "gentlemen, this is the present which, in your name, I lay at the prince's feet."

"A crown!" cried the duke, scarcely able to stand, "a crown for me, gentlemen!"

"Long live François III.!" shouted all the gentlemen, in tones that shook the building, and, at the same time, drawing their swords.

"For me! for me!" stammered the prince, quaking with joy and terror, — "for me! Oh, it is impossible! My brother lives; my brother is the Lord's anointed."

"We depose him," said the duke, "waiting until God sanctions the election we have made by his death, or, rather, waiting until some of his subjects, weary of this inglorious reign, anticipate by poison or dagger the justice of God!"

"Gentlemen!" said the prince, feebly, "gentlemen"—

"Monseigneur," interupted the cardinal, "to the noble scruple your Highness has just now expressed, this is our answer: Henri III. was the Lord's anointed, but we have deposed him: he is no longer the elect of God; it is you who are going to be so. We have here a temple as venerable as that of Rheims, for within it repose the relics of Sainte Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris; within it is interred the body of Clovis, our first Christian king. Well, then, monseigneur, in this holy temple, before the statue of

the real founder of the French monarchy, I, a prince of the Church, who may not unreasonably hope one day to become her head, say to you, monseigneur, that I have here a holy oil sent by Pope Gregory XIII. to take the place of the holy chrism. Monseigneur, name your future archbishop of Rheims, name your constable, and in a moment you will be our anointed king, and your brother Henri, unless he surrender the throne to you, will be the usurper. Child, light the altar."

Immediately the chorister, who was evidently expecting the order, issued from the sacristy with a lighter in his hand, and in a moment fifty lights blazed on the altar and in the choir.

Then were seen on the altar a mitre, gleaming with jewels, and a sword, adorned with flower-de-luces: the one was the archiepiscopal mitre; the other the constable's sword.

The same instant, through the darkness which the illumination of the choir had not entirely dispersed, the "*Veni Creator*" resounded from the organ.

This startling scenic display, so skilfully introduced by the three Lorraine princes, was a surprise to the Duc d'Anjou himself, and produced the deepest impression on the spectators. The bold grew bolder, and the weak felt themselves strengthened.

The Duc d'Anjou raised his head, and, with firmer step and steadier arm than could have been expected, marched up to the altar, took the mitre in his left hand and the sword in his right, returned to the cardinal and the duke, who knew already the honors in store for them, placed the mitre on the cardinal's head, and buckled the sword on the duke.

This decisive action, which was the less expected because the Duc d'Anjou's irresolute nature was a matter of notoriety, was hailed with thunders of applause.

"Gentlemen," said the duke to the others, "give your names to M. de Mayenne, grand master of France; the day I am king you shall all be Knights of the Order."

The applause was renewed, and all went after one another to give their names to the Duc de Mayenne.

"*Mordieu!*" thought Chicot, "what a chance to win the blue ribbon! I'll never see such another — and to think I must let it slip!"

"Now to the altar, sire," said the Cardinal de Guise.

"M. de Monsoreau, my captain-colonel, MM. de Ribeirac

and D'Entragues, my captains, M. de Livarot, my lieutenant of the guards, take the places in the choir to which the posts I confide to you give you a right."

Each of those named took the position which, at a real coronation, etiquette would have assigned him.

"Gentlemen," added the duke, addressing the rest of the assembly, "you may all ask me for a favor, and I will see to it that none of you depart dissatisfied."

During this time the cardinal was robing himself in his pontifical vestments behind the altar. He soon reappeared, carrying the holy ampulla, which he laid on the altar.

Then, at a sign from him, the little chorister brought a Bible and a cross. The cardinal took both, placed the cross on the Bible, and presented them to the Duc d'Anjou, who laid his hand on them.

"In presence of God," said the prince, "I promise my people to maintain and honor our holy religion, as it behooves the most Christian King and eldest son of the Church to do. And so may God and his Holy Gospel aid me!"

"Amen!" answered all the spectators in unison.

"Amen!" responded a kind of echo that seemed to come from the depths of the church.

The Duc de Guise, in performance of his function as constable, mounted the three steps of the altar and laid his sword in front of the tabernacle to be blessed by the cardinal.

The cardinal next drew it from the scabbard, and, seizing the blade, presented the hilt to the king, who clasped it.

"Sire," said he, "take this sword, which is given to you with the benediction of the Lord, so that with it and through the power of the Holy Ghost you may be able to resist all your enemies, and protect and defend Holy Church and the kingdom entrusted to you. Take this sword so that with its aid you may dispense justice, protect the widow and the orphan, and correct abuses, to the end that, covering yourself with glory by the practice of all the virtues, you may deserve to reign with Him whose image you are on earth, and who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, reigneth for ever and ever."

The duke lowered the sword until the point touched the floor, and, after offering it to God, restored it to the Duc de Guise.

Then the chorister brought a cushion and placed it before the prince, who knelt upon it.

Next, the cardinal opened the little silver-gilt casket and extracted from it, with the point of a gold needle, a particle of holy oil, which he spread on the patine.

Then, holding the patine in his left hand, he said two prayers over the duke, and, smearing his finger with the oil, traced a cross on his head, saying:

"*Ungo te in regem de oleo sanctificato, in nomine Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.*"

Almost immediately after, the chorister wiped off the oil with a gold-embroidered handkerchief.

Next, the cardinal took the crown in both his hands and held it immediately above the prince's head, without, however, touching it. The Duc de Guise and the Duc de Mayenne then approached and supported the crown on each side. The cardinal, thereupon, withdrew his right hand from the crown and with it blessed the prince, saying:

"May God crown you with the crown of glory and justice!"

Then taking the crown and placing it on the duke's head, he said:

"Receive this crown in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

The Duc d'Anjou, pale and frightened, felt the pressure of the crown on his head and instinctively raised his hand to touch it.

Then the chorister rang a bell; all the spectators bent their heads.

But they soon raised them again, brandishing their swords and crying:

"Long live François III.!"

"Sire," said the cardinal to the Duc d'Anjou, "from to-day you reign over France, for you have been crowned by Pope Gregory XIII. himself, and I am merely his representative."

"*Ventre de biche!*" muttered Chicot, "what a pity it is I have n't the king's evil!"

"Gentlemen," said the Duc d'Anjou, rising with an air of pride and majesty, "I shall never forget the names of the thirty gentlemen who were the first to deem me worthy of reigning over them; and now, gentlemen, farewell, and may God have you in his safe and holy keeping!"

The cardinal bent his head, as did also the Duc de Guise, but Chicot, who had a side view of them, perceived that while the Duc de Mayenne was escorting the new king from the

church, the other two Lorraine princes exchanged an ironical smile.

"Oho!" said the Gascon to himself, "what does that mean, I wonder, and what kind of a game is it at which every one cheats?"

Meanwhile the Duc d'Anjou descended the staircase to the crypt and was soon lost in the darkness of the subterranean church, whither all the other members of the association followed him, one after the other, except the three brothers, who entered the sacristy, and the brother porter, who remained to put out the lights on the altar.

The chorister shut the door of the crypt behind those who had passed in, and the church was lit only by that single lamp which, as it was never extinguished, seemed an unknown symbol to the vulgar, but told the elect of some mysterious initiation.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW CHICOT THOUGHT HE WAS LEARNING HISTORY, BUT WAS REALLY LEARNING GENEALOGY.

Chicot got up in his confessional to straighten out his stiffened members. He had every reason to suppose this session was the last, and, as it was nearly two in the morning, he set about making himself comfortable for the rest of the night.

But, to his amazement, no sooner did the three Lorraine princes hear the grating of the key in the lock of the crypt than they came out of the sacristy; this time, however, they were unfrocked and in their usual dress.

Moreover, when the little chorister saw them, he burst out into such a frank and merry fit of laughter that Chicot could not, for the life of him, help laughing also, without exactly knowing why.

The Duc de Mayenne quickly approached the staircase.

"Do not laugh so boisterously, sister," said he, "they have barely left, and you might be heard."

"Sister!" repeated Chicot, marching from one surprise to another. "Can this little devil of a monk be a woman?"

And, in fact, when the cowl of the novice was flung back,

there appeared the brightest and most bewitching woman's face that ever Leonardo da Vinci transferred to canvas, although he has painted La Goconda: —

Jet black eyes, sparkling with mischief, but which, when the pupils dilated, became still darker and assumed an expression that was almost terrible in its seriousness.

A little, rosy, delicately formed mouth, a nose that was faultless in shape and outline, and, finally, a beautifully rounded chin terminating the perfect oval of a countenance that was, perhaps, rather pale, but contrasted superbly with the ebony of the classical eyebrows.

Such is the portrait of the sister of the Guises, Madame de Montpensier, a dangerous siren who was accused of having one shoulder a little higher than the other and of an ungraceful malformation of the left leg that made her limp slightly; but these imperfections were hidden at present by her thick monkish robe.

It was, perhaps, because of these imperfections that the soul of a demon was lodged in a body which had the head of an angel.

Chicot recognized her, for he had seen her a score of times at the court of her cousin, Queen Louise de Vaudemont, and the mystery was deepened by her presence here, as it was by that of the three brothers who persisted so obstinately in remaining after every one else had gone.

"Ah, Brother Cardinal," exclaimed the duchess, in a paroxysm of laughter, "how well you acted the saint and how piously you spoke of God! You actually frightened me for a moment. I thought you were taking the thing seriously; and the fool who let himself be greased and crowned! — and what an object he was under that same crown!"

"That does n't matter," said the duke, "we have got what we wanted: François cannot eat his own words now. That Monsoreau, who no doubt has his own sinister motives for his action, has managed so well that we are at last pretty certain that our doughty leader cannot desert us half-way to the scaffold, as he did La Mole and Coconnas."

"Oh, as for that," answered Mayenne, "the way to the scaffold is a route there would be some difficulty in getting the princes of our house to take; the distance between the abbey of St. Geneviève and the Louvre will always be less than that between the Hôtel de Ville and the Place de Grène."

Chicot saw they were making sport of the Duc d'Anjou, and, as he hated the prince, he could have gladly embraced the Guises for hoodwinking him so artfully — all except Mayenne: he would give Mayenne's share in the embrace to Madame de Montpensier.

"And now to business, gentlemen," said the cardinal. "Are all the doors safely locked?"

"I am sure they are," answered the duchess; "but I will go and see."

"No, no," said the duke, "you must be tired, my dear little choir boy."

"Oh, not at all; the whole thing was too amusing."

"Mayenne, you said he was here, did you not?" asked the duke.

"Yes."

"I did not notice him."

"Naturally. He is hiding."

"Where?"

"In a confessional."

The words sounded in Chicot's ears like the thousand trumpets of the Apocalypse.

"Who is hiding in a confessional?" he muttered, quaking like an aspen. "*Ventre de biche*, there can be no one hiding but me!"

"Then he has seen and heard everything?" inquired the duke.

"Oh, that does n't matter; does n't he belong to us?"

"Bring him here, Mayenne," said the duke.

Mayenne went down one of the stairs of the choir, paused as if at a loss, and then made straight for the box that concealed the Gascon.

Chicot was brave, but this time his teeth fairly chattered with terror, and cold drops of sweat dropped from his forehead on his hand.

"Ah, now I 'm in for it!" said he to himself, trying to free his sword from the folds of his robe, "but I won't die in this box, like a rat in a hole. I 'll show a bold front to death, if I have to, *ventre de biche!* And now that I have the chance, I 'll try to make short work of that fellow before I hop the twig myself."

And, with the purpose of executing this doughty project, Chicot, who had at length found the hilt of his sword, had his

hand already on the latch of the door, when the voice of the duchess came to his ears.

"Not that one, Mayenne," said she, "not that one; the other to the left, yonder at the back."

"Ah, I see," answered the duke, whose hand almost touched Chicot's confessional, but who, on hearing his sister's direction, turned quickly to the confessional opposite.

"Ugh!" said the Gascon, with a sigh that Gorenflot might have envied, "it was a narrow escape; but who the devil is in the other one?"

"Come out, Maître Nicolas David," said Mayenne, "we are alone."

"Here I am, monseigneur," said a man who stepped from the confessional.

"Good!" murmured the Gascon, "the party was not complete without you, Maître Nicolas. I sought thee long, and now that I have found thee, lo! meseemeth I care not for thy company, Maître Nicolas!"

"You have seen and heard everything, have you not?" asked the Duc de Guise.

"I have not lost a word of what occurred, and you may rest assured, monseigneur, I shall not forget a single detail."

"Then you will be able to relate everything to the envoy of his Holiness Gregory XIII.?" inquired the Balafré.

"Without omitting a particle."

"By the way, my brother Mayenne tells me you have done wonders for us. Would you mind saying what you have done?"

The cardinal and the duchess, moved by curiosity, drew near, so that the three princes and their sister formed one group.

Nicolas David was three feet from them, in the full light of the lamp.

"I have done what I promised, monseigneur," answered Nicolas David, "and that means I have found a way of proving your undoubted right to sit on the throne of France."

"They, too!" thought Chicot; "why, it looks as if every one was going to be king of France! Well, let the best man win."

It will be seen that our brave Chicot was recovering his gayety. This was due to the following circumstances:

In the first place, he had a fair prospect of escaping from an

imminent peril in a very unexpected fashion ; secondly, he was on the point of discovering a nice conspiracy ; and lastly, said conspiracy would supply him with the means of destroying his two great enemies, Mayenne and David.

"Dear Gorenflot," he murmured, when all these ideas had found a lodging in his brain, "what a stunning supper I 'll give you to-morrow for the loan of your frock ! You wait and see."

"But if the usurpation is too evident, we must give it up," said Henri de Guise. "I cannot have all the kings in Christendom who reign by right divine snarling at my heels."

"I have anticipated this scruple, monseigneur," said the lawyer, bowing to the duke and meeting the eyes of the triumvirate confidently. "I am something more than a skilful fencer, although my enemies, to deprive me of your favor, may have reported to the contrary. Being versed in theological and legal studies, I have naturally, as a good casuist and legist is bound to do, examined the annals and decrees which support my statements as to the customs regulating the succession to the throne. Legitimacy is the main factor in this succession, and I have discovered that you are the legitimate heirs, and the Valois but a parasitic and usurping branch."

The assurance with which Nicolas David uttered this exordium elated Madame de Montpensier, quickened the curiosity of the cardinal and Mayenne, and almost smoothed away the wrinkles on the austere brow of the Duc de Guise.

"Still, it is difficult to believe," said he, "that the house of Lorraine, illustrious as it most assuredly is, can claim precedence over that of Valois."

"And yet it is proved, monseigneur," said Maître Nicolas, lifting his frock and drawing a parchment from his voluminous breeches, not without disclosing by this movement the hilt of a long rapier.

The duke took the parchment from the hands of Nicolas David.

"What is this ?" asked he.

"The genealogical tree of the house of Lorraine."

"The trunk of which is ?"

"Charlemagne, monseigneur."

"Charlemagne ?" cried the three brothers, with an air of incredulity, which was, nevertheless, not unmixed with satisfaction.

"It is impossible," said the Duc de Guise. "The first Duc de Lorraine was a contemporary of Charlemagne, but his name was Ranier, and he was in no way related to that great emperor."

"Stay a moment, monseigneur," said Nicolas. "You must surely understand that I have not been dealing with one of those questions which are answered by a simple contradiction, and which any court of heraldry would set at nought. What you need is a protracted lawsuit which will occupy the attention of the Parliament and of the people, and which will give you time to influence, not the people, — they are yours already, — but the Parliament. And now, monseigneur, this is your true pedigree :

"Ranier, first Duc de Lorraine, contemporary of Charlemagne ;

"Guibert, his son, contemporary of Louis le Débonnaire ;

"Henri, son of Guibert, contemporary of Charles the Bald"—

"But," said the Duke de Guise.

"A little patience, monseigneur. We are getting on ; pray, pay close attention — Bonne."

"Yes," interrupted the Duke, "daughter of Ricin, second son of Ranier."

"Well," returned the lawyer, "whom did she marry ?"

"Bonne ?"

"Yes."

"Charles de Lorraine, son of Louis IV., King of France."

"Charles de Lorraine, son of Louis IV., King of France," repeated David. "Now add : brother of Lothaire, and deprived of the crown of France by Hugues Capet, who usurped it after the death of Louis V."

"Oh, oh !" exclaimed the Duc de Mayenne and the cardinal.

"Go on," said the Balafré, "I am beginning to get a glimpse of your meaning."

"Now, Charles de Lorraine was the heir of his brother when the race of the latter became extinct. Now, the race of Lothaire is extinct ; consequently, gentlemen, you are the true and sole heirs of the crown of France."

"*Mordieu !*" thought Chicot ; "he 's even a more venomous beast than I had supposed."

"What do you say to this, brother ?" asked the Duc de Mayenne and the cardinal in unison.

"I say," answered the Balafré, "that there exists, unfortunately, a law in France which is called the Salic law, and which utterly destroys our claims."

"Just what I expected you to say, monseigneur," cried David, with the pride born of self-esteem: "what is the first example of the Salic law?"

"The accession of Philippe de Valois to the prejudice of Edward of England."

"What is the date of that accession?"

The Balafré tried to recollect.

"1328," said the cardinal, without hesitation.

"That is to say, three hundred and forty-one years after the usurpation of Hugues Capet, two hundred and forty years after the extinction of the race of Lothaire. Then, for two hundred and forty years before the Salic law was invented, your ancestors had a right to the throne. Now, every one knows that no law has a retroactive effect."

"You are an able man, Maître Nicolas David," said the Balafré, regarding him with a mixture of admiration and contempt.

"It is exceedingly ingenious," added the cardinal.

"And exceedingly fine," said Mayenne.

"It is admirable," continued the duchess; "so I am princess royal; I will have no one less than the Emperor of Germany for a husband now."

"O Lord God!" murmured Chicot, "thou knowest I have never offered thee but one prayer: '*Ne nos inducas in tentationem, et libera nos ab advocatis.*'"

The Duc de Guise alone remained grave and thoughtful amid the general enthusiasm.

"And to say that such subterfuges are needed in the case of a man of my height," he murmured. "To think that the people will base their obedience on parchments like that, instead of reading a man's title to nobility in the flash of his eyes or of his sword!"

"You are right, Henri," said the cardinal, 'right a thousand times. And if men were content to judge by the face, you would be a king among kings, since other princes appear common by your side. But, to mount the throne, a protracted lawsuit is, as Maître Nicolas David has said, absolutely essential; and when you are seated on it, it will be important, as you have admitted yourself, that the escutcheon of our house

should not seem inferior to the escutcheons suspended above the other royal thrones of Europe."

"Then I presume this genealogy is a good one," said Henri de Guise, with a sigh, "and here are the two hundred gold crowns promised you in my name by my brother Mayenne, Maître Nicolas David."

"And here are another two hundred," said the cardinal to the lawyer, whose eyes sparkled with delight as he stuffed them into his capacious breeches; "they are for the new mission which we are going to give you."

"Speak, monseigneur, I am entirely at the orders of your Eminence."

"We cannot empower you to bear yourself to the Holy Father Gregory XIII. this genealogy, which requires his approval. Your rank would hardly entitle you to admission to the Vatican."

"Alas! yes," said Nicolas David, "I have high aspirations, but I am of humble birth. Ah! if only I had been born a simple private gentleman!"

"Can't you keep your mouth shut, you vagabond!" said Chicot.

"But you are not," continued the cardinal, "and it is unfortunate. We are therefore compelled to entrust Pierre de Gondy with this mission."

"Excuse me, brother," said the duchess, now quite serious; "the Gondys are, of course, exceedingly clever, but they are people over whom we have no hold. Their ambition is their only guarantee, and they may conclude that their ambition will receive as much satisfaction from King Henri as from the House of Guise."

"My sister is right, Louis," said the Duc de Mayenne, with his customary roughness, "and we cannot trust Pierre de Gondy as we trust Nicolas David, who is our man and whom we can have hanged whenever we choose."

This brutal hint, aimed point-blank at the face of the lawyer, had the most unfortunate effect on Maître David. He broke into a convulsive fit of laughter that betrayed the most excessive terror.

"Our brother Charles is jesting," said Henri de Guise to the trembling jurist. "We all recognize you as our trusty follower; you have proved that you are so in many cases."

"And notably in mine," thought Chicot, shaking his fist at his enemy, or rather, at his two enemies.

"You need not be alarmed, Charles," said the cardinal, "nor need you be, either, Catharine; all my measures have been taken in advance. Pierre de Gondy will carry this genealogy to Rome, but mixed with other papers, without knowing what he is carrying. The Pope will approve or disapprove, without Gondy knowing anything of his approval or disapproval, and, finally, Gondy will return to France, still ignorant of what he carries, bringing us back the genealogy, whether it be approved or disapproved. You, Nicolas David, must start at the same hour he does, and you must wait for him at Chalons or Lyons or Avignon, according as the despatches you will receive from us direct you to stop in one of these three cities. Thus, the true secret of the enterprise will be in your possession and in yours only. You see clearly, then, that we regard you as our confidential agent."

David bowed.

"Thou knowest on what condition, dear friend," murmured Chicot: "to be hanged if thou committest a blunder; but rest easy, I swear by Sainte Geneviève, here present in plaster or marble or wood, or perhaps even in bone, that thou 'rt stationed at this moment between two gibbets, but the one nearest thee, dear friend, is the one I am building."

The three brothers shook hands and kissed their sister the duchess, who had come to them with the three robes left behind in the sacristy. Then, after aiding them to don these garments of safety, she drew down her cowl over her eyes, and preceded them to the porch, where the brother porter awaited them. Then all four disappeared, followed by Nicolas David, whose gold crowns clinked at every step.

The brother porter barred the door behind them, then returned to the church and extinguished the lamp in the choir. Immediately the chapel was enshrouded in thickest darkness, and Chicot felt a revival of that mysterious horror which had already more than once raised every single hair on his skull.

After this, the sound of the monk's sandals on the pavement became fainter and still fainter until it died away in the distance.

Then five minutes passed, and a very long five minutes they seemed to Chicot, without anything occurring to trouble the silence and the darkness.

"Good," said the Gascon, "this time everything is apparently finished. The three acts are played and the actors have departed. I must try to follow their example: I have had enough of that sort of comedy for a single night."

And Chicot, who, since he had seen tombs moving and confessionals with tenants in them, was no longer inclined to stay in the church till daybreak, softly raised the latch, pushed the door open cautiously, and stepped out of his box.

While observing the goings and comings of the chorister, Chicot had noticed in a corner a ladder intended for use in cleaning the stained-glass windows. He lost no time. Groping with his hands, and stepping carefully, he reached the corner without making any noise, laid his hand on the ladder, and, finding his way as best he could, placed the ladder at a window.

By the light of the moon, Chicot saw that he had not been deceived in his anticipations: the window opened on the graveyard of the convent, and the graveyard was divided from the Rue Bordelle.

Chicot opened the window, threw a leg over the sill, and, drawing the ladder to him with that energy and dexterity which fear or joy always gives, he passed it from the inside to the outside.

As soon as he was on the ground, he hid the ladder in a clump of yew-trees at the foot of the wall, stole from tomb to tomb to the last fence between him and the street, and clambered over this obstacle, not without bringing some stones down along with him into the street on the other side.

Once there, he breathed long and heavily.

He had escaped with a few scratches from a wasp's nest where he had felt more than once that his life was at stake.

Then, when the air moved freely through his lungs, he made his way to the Rue Saint-Jacques, not stopping until he reached the *Corne d'Abondance*, and knocked at the door without hesitation or delay.

Maître Claude Bonhomet opened the door in person.

He was a man who knew that any inconvenience he suffered was generally made up to him, and who depended for the building up of his fortune more on his extras than on his ordinary custom.

He recognized Chicot at the first glance, although Chicot had left the inn as a cavalier and returned to it as a monk.

"So it's you, my gentleman," said he; "you are welcome."

Chicot handed him a crown.

"And Brother Gorenflot?" he asked.

The face of the innkeeper expanded in a broad smile.

He advanced to the private room and pushed open the door.

"Look," said he.

Brother Gorenflot was snoring in exactly the same spot where Chicot had left him.

"*Ventre de biche!* my venerated friend," said the Gascon, "you have had a terrible nightmare, and never suspected it!"

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW MONSIEUR AND MADAME DE SAINT-LUC TRAVELLED AND MET WITH A TRAVELLING COMPANION.

NEXT morning, about the hour when Brother Gorenflot, comfortably huddled up in his robe, was beginning to wake, our reader, if he had travelled on the highway from Paris to Angers, might have seen, somewhere between Chartres and Nogent, two horsemen, a gentleman and his page, whose peaceful nags were ambling side by side, rubbing each other's noses, communicating their mutual sentiments by neighing or breathing, like honest animals, which, though deprived of the gift of speech, had, and not the less on that account, discovered a way to give expression to their thoughts.

The two horsemen had reached Chartres the evening before, almost at the same hour, on smoking and frothing coursers; one of the two coursers had even fallen on the cathedral square, and as this happened just at the time when the faithful were going to mass, the citizens of Chartres were moved at the spectacle of the death of this noble steed, for which its owners seemed to feel no more concern than if it had been some spavined jade.

Some had noticed — the citizens of Chartres have been celebrated in all ages as wide-awake observers — some, we repeat, had even noticed that the taller of the two horsemen had slipped a crown into the hand of an honest lad, who thereupon guided the pair to a neighboring inn, and that, half an hour later, they had issued forth through the back gate opening on the plain, mounted on fresh steeds, and with a high color

on their cheeks that bore testimony to the excellence of the glasses of hot wine they had just imbibed.

Once in the country — bare and naked enough, but tinged with those bluish tones that are the harbingers of spring — the taller of the two cavaliers drew near the smaller, and opening his arms, said:

"My own dear little wife, you may kiss me at your ease, for now we have nothing more to fear."

Then Madame de Saint-Luc, for it was she beyond a doubt, leaned gracefully forward, opened the mantle in which she was muffled, rested her arms on the young man's shoulders, and, with her eyes plunged into the depths of his, gave him the lingering, tender kiss he had asked.

As a result of the confidence expressed by Saint-Luc to his wife, and perhaps also as a result of the kiss given by Madame de Saint-Luc to her husband, they stopped that day at a little hostelry in the village of Courville, only four miles from Chartres. This hostelry, by its isolation, its doors front and rear, and by a thousand other advantages, assured to the two lovers perfect security.

There they remained a whole day and a whole night, mysteriously concealed in their little chamber, where they shut themselves up after breakfast, requesting the host not to disturb them before dawn next day, as they were very tired after their long journey, and this request was obeyed to the letter.

It was on the forenoon of that day that we discover Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Luc on the highway between Paris and Nogent.

As they were feeling more tranquil on that day than on the evening before, they were no longer travelling as fugitives, nor even as lovers, but as schoolboys who turn out of their way every moment to plunder the early buds, collect the early mosses, or gather the early flowers, — those sentinels of spring that pierce the crests of winter's fleeing snows, — and take infinite delight in the play of the sunlight on the sparkling plumage of the ducks, or in the flitting of a hare across the plain.

"*Morbleu!*" cried Saint-Luc, suddenly, "what a glorious thing it is to be free! Have you ever been free, Jeanne?"

"I?" answered the young wife, in tones of exuberant joy, "never; this is the very first time in my life I have had my fill of air and space. My father was suspicious; my mother

home-keeping. I never went out except attended by a governess, two maids, and a big lackey. I never remember running on the grass, since the time when, a wild, laughing child, I used to scamper through the great woods of Méridor with my good Diane, challenging her to a race and scudding through the branches until we lost sight of each other. Then we would stop, panting, at the noise of a stag, or doe, or red deer, which, in its alarm at our approach, rushed from its haunt, and then we would be alone, thrilled by the silence of the vast forest. But, at least, you were free, my love."

"I free?"

"Of course, a man" —

"Well, then, I have never been free. Reared with the Duc d'Anjou; brought by him to Poland, and brought back by him again to Paris; condemned to be always at his side by the perpetual laws of etiquette; followed, whenever I tried to get away, by that doleful voice of his, crying:

"'Saint-Luc, my friend, I am bored; come here and we 'll be bored in company.'

"Free! ah, yes, indeed! with that corset that strangled my stomach, and that monstrous starched ruff that rubbed the skin off my neck, and that dirty gum with which I had to curl my hair, and that little cap fastened on my head by pins. Oh, no, no, my dear Jeanne, I don't think I was as free as you were. So you see I am making the most of my liberty. Great heavens! is there anything in the world to be compared to freedom? and what fools are they who give it up when they might have kept it?"

"But what if we were caught, Saint-Luc?" said the young woman, with an anxious glance behind her; "what if we were put in the Bastile?"

"If we are there together, my own, it will be but half a misfortune. If I recollect aright, we were as much confined yesterday as if we had been state prisoners, and we did not find it particularly irksome."

"Saint-Luc," said Jeanne, smiling archly, "don't indulge in useless hopes; if we are taken, you may be quite sure we shall not be locked up together."

And the charming young woman blushed at the thought that, while saying so little, she would have liked to say so much.

"Then, if that be the case, we must conceal ourselves well," said Saint-Luc.

"Oh, you need not be alarmed," answered Jeanne, "we have nothing to fear, we shall be concealed perfectly. If you knew Méridor and its tall oaks, that seem like pillars of a temple whose dome is the sky, and its endless thickets and its sleepy rivers, that in summer glide under dusky arches of verdure, and in winter creep under layers of dead foliage, its wide lawns, its immense ponds, its fields of corn, its acres of flowers, and the little turrets from which thousands of doves are continually escaping, flitting and buzzing like bees around a hive — And that is not all, Saint-Luc: in the midst of this little kingdom, its queen, the enchantress of these gardens of Armida, the lovely, the good, the peerless Diane, a heart of diamond set in gold, — you will love her, Saint-Luc."

"I love her already, since she has loved you."

"Oh, I am very sure she loves me still and will love me always. Diane is not the woman to change capriciously in her friendships. But you can have no idea of the happy life we shall lead in this nest of moss and flowers, now about to feel the verdant touch of spring! Diane is the real ruler of the household, so we need not be afraid of disturbing the baron. He is a warrior of the time of François I., now as feeble and inoffensive as he was once strong and daring; he thinks only of the past, Marignano's victor and Pavia's vanquished; his present tenderness and his future hopes are concentrated on his beloved Diane. We can live in Méridor, and he not know or even perceive it. And if he know? Oh, we can get out of the difficulty by listening attentively while he assures us that Diane is the most beautiful girl in the world and François I. the greatest captain of all ages."

"It will be delightful," said Saint-Luc, "but I foresee some terrible quarrels."

"Between whom?"

"The baron and me."

'About what? François I.?"

"No, I 'll give way to him on that point; but about the most beautiful woman in the world."

"Oh, I do not count; you see I 'm your wife."

"Ah, you 're right there," said Saint-Luc.

"Just fancy what our existence will be, my love," continued Jeanne. "In the morning we 're off for the woods through the little gate of the pavilion which Diane will make over to us for our abode. I know that pavilion: a dainty little house

built under Louis XII., with a turret at either end. Fond as you are of flowers and lace, you will be charmed with its delicate architecture; and then such a number of windows, windows from which you have a view of the quiet, sombre woods, as far as the eye can reach, and of the deer feeding in the avenues, raising their startled heads at every whisper of the forest; from the windows opposite you have a vision of plains golden with corn, white-walled cottages with their red-tiled roofs, the Loire glistening in the sun and populous with little boats; then, nine miles away, a bark among the reeds for ourselves; then, our own horses and dogs, with which we 'll course the stag through the great woods, while the old baron, unaware of the presence of his guests, will say, as he hears the baying in the distance: 'Listen, Diane; would you not fancy Astrea and Phlegethon were hunting?'

"And Diane would answer: 'And if they are hunting, dear father, let them hunt.'"

"Let us push on, Jeanne," said Saint-Luc, "you make me long to be at Méridor."

And they clapped spurs to their horses, which, for two or three leagues, galloped like lightning, then halted to allow their riders to resume an interrupted conversation or improve an awkwardly given kiss.

In this fashion they journeyed from Chartres to Mans, where they spent a whole day, feeling now almost secure; it was another delightful halt in their delightful rambles; but next morning they made a firm resolution to reach Méridor that very evening, and to make their way through the sandy forests which, at that period, stretched from Guècelard to Écomoy.

When Saint-Luc came to them, he regarded his perils as things of the past — he was well acquainted with the King's fiery yet sluggish temper. According to the state of his mind after Saint-Luc's flight, he would have sent twenty couriers and a hundred guards after them with orders to take them dead or alive, or else he would have sighed heavily, raised his arms above the bed-clothes, and murmured:

"Ah! traitor Saint-Luc! why have I not known thee sooner?"

Now, as the fugitives had not seen any courier at their heels and had not encountered any guards, the probability was that the slothful temper of King Henri had got the better of his fiery temper, and so he was letting them alone.

Such were the thoughts of Saint-Luc as he glanced behind him occasionally, without catching sight of a single pursuer on his solitary path.

"Good," said Saint-Luc to himself, "poor Chicot must have had to face the brunt of the storm; fool though he be, and, perhaps, because he is a fool, he gave me good advice. He'll get out of the trouble with an anagram on me more or less witty."

And Saint-Luc recalled a terrible anagram Chicot had made on him in the heyday of his favor.

Suddenly Saint-Luc felt the pressure of his wife's hand on his arm.

He started. It was not a caress.

"Look," said Jeanne.

Saint-Luc turned round and saw on the horizon a horseman riding at a rapid pace along the road they were following.

This cavalier was on the most elevated part of the highway, and his form, as it stood out from the dull, gray sky, seemed far larger than life, an effect of perspective our reader must have sometimes noticed in similar circumstances.

In the eyes of Saint-Luc the incident was of sinister augury: it came to cloud his hopes at the moment they were brightest, and, although he tried to put on an air of calmness, he knew the capricious nature of Henri III. too well not to be alarmed.

"Yes," said he, turning pale in spite of himself, "there is a horseman yonder."

"Let us fly," said Jeanne, spurring her horse.

"No," said Saint-Luc, who did not allow his fear to get entire control of him, "no, as far as I can judge, there is but a single horseman, and I must not run away from one man. Let us draw aside and let him pass; when he passes, we can continue our journey."

"But if he stops?"

"Oh, if he stops, we'll know with whom we have to deal, and act accordingly."

"You are right," said Jeanne, "and I was wrong to be afraid, since my Saint-Luc is here to protect me."

"For all that, we had better fly," said Saint-Luc, who, on looking back again, perceived that the stranger saw them and had set his horse to a gallop; "for there is a plume in yon hat and under the hat a ruff that make me uneasy."

"Goodness gracious! how can a plume and a ruff make you

uneasy?" asked Jeanne of her husband, who had seized her bridle rein and was hurrying her horse into the wood.

"Because the color of the feathers is at present very fashionable at court and the ruff is a new invention. Now, the dyeing of such plumes comes too high and the starching of such ruffs requires too much care to suit the pockets or the tastes of gentlemen belonging to the country whose fat pullets Chicot is so great an admirer of. Whip and spur, Jeanne; that cavalier looks to me to be the ambassador of the King, my august master."

"Yes, let us get on as fast as we can," said the young woman, who trembled at the idea of being separated from her husband.

But this was easier saying than doing. The trees were so thick as to form in front of them a wall of branches, and the soil was so sandy that the horses sank deep in it at every step.

Meanwhile, the horseman was coming on at a rattling pace, and they could hear his horse's gallop on the slope of the mountain.

"Good heavens! it 's now clear that he 's making for us," cried the young woman.

"By my faith!" said Saint-Luc, halting, "if that is the case, we may as well see what he wants, for, as it is, he could easily reach us on foot."

"He has stopped," said Jeanne.

"More than that; he has dismounted and is entering the wood, and by my soul, though he be the devil himself, I 'll have a talk with him."

"Wait," said Jeanne, holding him back, "wait. I think he 's calling to us."

She was right. The stranger, after tying his horse to a fir on the outskirt, entered the wood, shouting:

"Hullo! young gentleman! Devil take it, man, don't run away in that fashion. I 'm bringing you something you lost."

"What is he saying?" asked the countess.

"Faith," answered Saint-Luc, "he says we lost something."

"I say, little gentleman," continued the stranger, "you lost a bracelet in the hostelry at Courville. And a woman's portrait, too! Such an article should not be lost that way, above all, a portrait of the respectable Madame de Cossé. In the name of that venerated parent, do not keep me running after you."

"Why, I know that voice!" cried Saint-Luc.

"And he is speaking of my mother."

"Then you lost a bracelet, darling?"

"Yes, unfortunately; I only missed it this morning, and could not remember where I had left it."

"It 's Bussy, beyond a doubt," exclaimed Saint-Luc.

"The Comte de Bussy!" returned Jeanne, with feeling, — "our friend?"

"Certainly, it is our friend," said Saint-Luc, running with as much eagerness to meet the gentleman as he had lately shown to avoid him.

"Saint-Luc! I was not mistaken," cried Bussy, in his ringing voice, and, with a bound, he was beside the lovers.

"Good-day, madame," he continued, laughing heartily and offering the countess the portrait she had really forgotten in the hostelry at Courville, where it will be remembered our travellers spent a night.

"Have you come to arrest us by order of the King, M. de Bussy?" inquired Jeanne, smiling.

"I? Faith, no, I am not on sufficiently good terms with his Majesty for him to charge me with a confidential mission. No, when I found your bracelet at Courville, it occurred to me that you were on the road before me. Then I clapped spurs to my horse, saw two travellers, suspected they were you, and have chased you, though without wishing to do so. You forgive me?"

"So then," asked Saint-Luc, with a lingering suspicion, "it was chance that made you take the same road we did?"

"Chance," answered Bussy, "or, now that I have met you, I will rather say Providence."

All Saint-Luc's suspicions were overcome by the bright face and sincere smiles of the brave Bussy.

"So you are travelling?" said Jeanne.

"Yes," replied Bussy, leaping into the saddle.

"But not as we are?"

"No, unfortunately."

"I mean in disgrace. Where are you going?"

"In the direction of Angers. And you?"

"In the same direction."

"Ah, I understand. Brissac is about a dozen leagues from here, between Angers and Saumur, and you are naturally seeking a refuge in the paternal mansion, like hunted doves. It is

delightful, and I should envy your happiness, if envy were not such an abominable fault."

"Ah, M. de Bussy," said Jeanne, with a look of gratitude, "get married and you will be as happy as we are. It is so easy to be happy when you are loved."

And she turned her eyes on Saint-Luc with a smile, as if appealing to his testimony.

"Madame," answered Bussy, "I am rather distrustful of that sort of happiness. Every one is not as lucky as you have been in marrying by special license of the King."

"Oh, nonsense! a man like you, loved everywhere!"

"When a man is loved everywhere," said Bussy, with a sigh, "it is the same as being loved nowhere."

"Well," said Jeanne, with a look of intelligence at her husband, "let me marry you; in the first place, that would set many husbands I know at their ease, and, besides, I promise you that you will make acquaintance with that happiness which you believe does not exist."

"I do not deny that happiness exists, madame," said Bussy, sighing; "I only deny that it can exist for me."

"Will you let me marry you?" repeated the countess.

"If you marry me according to your taste, no; if according to mine, yes."

"You say that like a man wedded to single blessedness."

"Perhaps."

"Why, then, you must be in love with some woman you cannot marry?"

"Count," pleaded Bussy, "be merciful and beg Madame de Saint-Luc not to plunge a thousand daggers into my heart."

"Aha! Bussy, you had better look out, or I 'll believe it 's my wife you are in love with."

"In that case you will agree that as a lover I am full of delicacy, and that husbands have no reason to be jealous of me."

"Truer word was never spoken," answered Saint-Luc, remembering that it was Bussy who brought his wife to the Louvre. "But no matter, confess that some one has captured your heart."

"I confess it."

"A real love or only a fancy?" asked Jeanne.

"A passion, madame."

"I will cure you."

"I do not think so."

"I 'll find you a wife."

"I doubt it."

"I will render you happier than you deserve to be."

"Alas! madame, at present my only happiness is to be unhappy."

"I warn you I am very obstinate," said Jeanne.

"And I also."

"Count, you will surrender."

"By the way, madame," said the young man, "had we not better get out of this sand pit? Then you might make for that charming village which you see shining yonder in the sunlight, and lodge there for the night."

"Just as you like."

"Oh, I have no preference in the matter!"

"Then you 'll keep us company?"

"As far as the place where I am going; that is, if you have no objection."

"Not the least; quite the contrary. But why not come the whole way with us to where we are travelling?"

"And where are you traveling to?"

"To the Castle of Méridor."

Bussy's face flushed and then paled. In fact, his face became so livid that it was all over with his secret if Jeanne had not happened to be looking then at her husband with a smile.

While the two lovers were talking in the language of the eyes, Bussy had time to recover his self-control.

"To the Castle of Méridor, madame" said he, when he found sufficient strength to enable him to utter that name; "and what place is that?"

"It is the estate of one of my best friends," answered Jeanne.

"Of one of your best friends — and" — continued Bussy, "to whom does it belong?"

"Why," answered Madame de Saint-Luc, who was entirely ignorant of the events that had occurred at Méridor two months before, "is it possible you never heard of the Baron de Méridor, one of the wealthiest noblemen in Poitou, and" —

"And?" repeated Bussy, seeing that Jeanne paused.

"And of Diane de Méridor, the baron's daughter, and the most beautiful woman in the world?"

"No, madame," answered Bussy, almost choking from emotion.

And, while Jeanne was still gazing on her husband with a singular expression, this fine gentleman was wondering at the extraordinary good fortune that enabled him to meet on that road people who spoke of Diane — who echoed the only thought that held possession of his heart. Was it taking advantage of his credulity? that was not probable. Was it a snare? that was almost impossible. Saint-Luc was already far from Paris when he himself had made the acquaintance of Madame de Monsoreau and learned that her name was Diane de Méridor.

"And is this castle very far from here, madame?" asked Bussy.

"About seven leagues, I think; and I would offer to wager that it is there, and not in your little village shining in the sunlight, — in which, by the way, I have not the least confidence, — where we shall lodge this evening. You are coming, are you not?"

"Yes, madame."

"I'm glad of it. That is already a step toward the happiness I promised you."

Bussy bowed and kept near the young couple, who showed their gratitude by the delight they took in his company. For some time they were all silent. At length, Bussy, who had many things yet to learn, ventured to put a question. It was the privilege of his position, and he was determined to use it.

"And what sort of a man," he asked, "is this Baron de Méridor, whom you spoke of as being the wealthiest man in Poitou?"

"A perfect gentleman, a hero of the days of yore; a knight who, if he had lived in the days of King Arthur, would certainly have occupied a seat at the Round Table."

"And," again asked Bussy, controlling the muscles of his face and the emotion of his voice, "to whom is his daughter married?"

"His daughter married?"

"So I have asked."

"Diane married?"

"What is there extraordinary in that?"

"Nothing; but Diane is not married; certainly, I should be the first to be informed of it, if she were."

Bussy's heart swelled almost to bursting, and a painful sigh struggled to his throat and was strangled on its passage.

"Then," said he, "Mademoiselle de Méridor is in the castle with her father?"

"We have strong hopes she is," answered Saint-Luc, emphasizing his words to prove to his wife that he shared her ideas and associated himself with all her plans.

There was a moment's silence, during which each pursued a separate line of thought.

"Ah!" cried Jeanne, suddenly, rising in the stirrup, "yonder are the turrets of the castle. Look, look, M. de Bussy; you can catch a glimpse of them rising up from the middle of those leafless woods that will be so beautiful in another month. Do you see the slated roof?"

"Oh, yes, certainly," replied Bussy, with an emotion that astonished himself — for that brave heart had been, until a short time ago, somewhat insensible — "Yes, I see. So that is the Castle of Méridor?"

And by a natural mental reaction, at the aspect of this country, so rich and beautiful even when nature is most joyless, at the aspect of that lordly palace, he remembered the poor prisoner buried in the fogs of Paris and in the stifling retreat in the Rue Saint-Antoine.

And he sighed anew, but not altogether from sorrow. By promising him happiness, Madame de Saint-Luc had given him hope.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BEREAVED FATHER.

Madame de Saint-Luc was not mistaken: in two hours they were in front of the Castle of Méridor. Ever since the last words interchanged by the travellers, Bussy was considering whether he should not confide to the good friends he had just met the story of the adventure which kept Diane away from Méridor. However, if he once began his revelations, he should not only have to tell what every one would soon know, but also what he alone knew, and was not inclined to tell anybody. He naturally recoiled, therefore, before a disclosure that would give rise to too many interpretations and questions.

And, moreover, Bussy wished to enter Méridor as a perfect stranger. He wanted to take M. de Méridor unawares, to hear him speak of M. de Monsoreau and the Duc d'Anjou; he wanted, in a word, to be convinced, not that the story of Diane was true, — he did not for a moment suspect that angel of purity of a falsehood, — but that she herself had not been deceived on some point or other, and that the narrative which had interested him so powerfully was a faithful interpretation of events.

Bussy, as will be seen, was actuated by two sentiments that, ever amid the aberrations of passion, enable the superior man to preserve his empire over himself and others: these two sentiments were his prudent circumspection in the presence of strangers and the profoundest reverence for the beloved object.

And so, Madame de Saint-Luc, deceived, in spite of her feminine clearsightedness, by Bussy's perfect self-control, was persuaded that the young man had now heard for the first time the name of Diane, and that, as this name could not awaken within him either remembrance or hope, he no doubt expected to meet at Méridor some awkward country girl, who would be quite embarrassed in presence of her new guests.

Consequently, she looked forward to the pleasure of extracting a good deal of amusement from his astonishment.

But one thing surprised her: it was that when the guard blew a blast on his horn to announce visitors, Diane had not run at once to the drawbridge, as was her invariable custom in such cases.

Instead of Diane, a stooping old man, leaning on a staff, was seen advancing through the principal porch of the castle.

He had on a large green velvet coat faced with fur, and at his belt shone a silver whistle near a little bunch of keys.

The evening breeze lifted his long, snow-white hair.

He crossed the drawbridge, followed by two huge dogs of German breed, who walked behind him with slow and measured tread and lowered heads, never outstepping each other by an inch. When the old man reached the parapet:

"Who is there?" he asked, in a feeble voice, "and who does an old man the honor of visiting him?"

"It is I, Seigneur Augustin," cried the laughing voice of the young woman.

For this was the title Jeanne de Cossé used to give the

baron to distinguish him from his younger brother, who was called Guillaume, and had died only three years before.

But the baron, instead of answering with the joyous exclamation Jeanne had expected to hear, slowly shook his head, and fixing his undiscerning eyes on the travellers:

"You?" said he; "I do not see — who — you?"

"Good heavens!" cried Jeanne, "is it possible you do not recognize me? Ah, I forgot, — my disguise."

"Excuse me," said the old man, "but I hardly see at present. The eyes of the old are not made for weeping, and when they weep the tears burn them."

"My dear baron," said the young woman, "I can easily perceive that your sight is growing weak, else you would have recognized me even in my male uniform. Then, shall I have to tell you my name?"

"Yes, if you please," he answered. "I have told you I scarcely see you."

"Then you are going to find yourself nicely caught, Seigneur Augustin: I am Madame de Saint-Luc."

"Saint-Luc!" said the old man, "I do not know you."

"But my name before I was married," said the smiling young woman, "was Jeanne de Cossé-Brissac."

"Ah!" cried the old man, trying to open the gate with his trembling hands. "Ah! good God!"

Jeanne, who was puzzled by this strange reception, so different from what she expected, attributed it, however, to the decline of the old man's faculties. She jumped from her horse, and threw herself into his arms, as had been her custom; but when she touched the baron's cheeks she felt they were wet. He was weeping.

"With joy," she thought. "Ah! the heart is always young."

"Come," said the old man, after embracing Jeanne.

And, as though he had not perceived her two companions, he proceeded toward the castle, followed by his two dogs, who had only time to scent and eye the visitors.

The castle had a singularly dismal aspect; all the shutters were closed, and it looked like an immense tomb. Such of the servants as made their appearance were dressed in black. Saint-Luc directed a glance of inquiry at his wife. Was this the condition in which she had expected to find the castle?

Jeanne understood, and as she was in a hurry herself to

solve this perplexing riddle, she approached the baron and took his hand.

"And Diane?" she inquired. "Am I so unlucky as to find her absent?"

The old man halted as if thunder stricken, and gazed on the young woman with an expression that almost resembled terror.

"Diane!" said he.

And suddenly, at that name, the two dogs on each side of their master raised their heads and uttered a doleful howl.

Bussy could not help shuddering. Jeanne looked at Saint-Luc, and Saint-Luc stood still, not knowing whether to advance or retreat.

"Diane!" repeated the old man, as if he had needed time to understand the question put to him, "then you do not know?"

And his weak, quivering voice died away in a sob wrung from the very depths of his heart.

"But what is the matter? What has happened?" cried Jeanne, greatly moved.

"Diane is dead!" cried the old man, raising his hands in a despairing gesture to heaven, and bursting into a flood of tears.

When he reached the door he sank down on the first steps, buried his face in his hands, rocking himself backward and forward, as if he could thereby chase away the dismal memories that were incessantly torturing him.

"Dead!" cried Jeanne, in dismay, turning as pale as a ghost.

"Dead!" said Saint-Luc, in tender compassion for the old man.

"Dead!" stammered Bussy. "Then he has let him believe she was dead. Ah, poor old man! how you will love me some day!"

"Dead! dead!" repeated the baron; "they killed her!"

"Ah! my dear baron," said Jeanne, who, after the terrible blow that had fallen upon her, had found the only relief that keeps the feeble hearts of women from breaking — tears.

And she broke into a tempest of sobs, bathing the old man's face with her tears as she hung about his neck.

The old baron stumbled to his feet.

"No matter," said he, "though the house be empty and desolate, it is not the less hospitable on that account; enter."

Jeanne took his arm, crossed the peristyle and the ancient guardroom, now a dining-room, and entered the drawing-room.

A servant, whose agitated countenance and reddened eyes gave evidence of his tender devotion to his master, walked in front, opening the doors ; Saint-Luc and Bussy followed.

On reaching the drawing-room, the old man sat down, or, rather, sank on his great carved armchair.

The servant opened a window to let in fresh air, and, instead of leaving the apartment, retired to a corner.

Jeanne did not dare to break the silence. She dreaded re-opening the old man's wounds if she were to question him ; and yet, like all who are young and happy, she could not bring herself to credit the reality of the misfortune that was announced to her. At a certain age it is impossible to sound the abysses of death, because death is scarcely believed in.

It was the baron who gave her an opportunity of renewing the conversation.

"You told me, my dear Jeanne, you were married ; is this gentleman your husband ?"

And he pointed to Bussy.

"No, Seigneur Augustin," answered Jeanne. "This is M. de Saint-Luc."

Saint-Luc bowed lower before the unhappy father than he ever would have done before the old man. The latter returned the salute in a fatherly manner, and even attempted to smile. Then, turning his glassy eyes on Bussy, he said to her :

"I suppose this gentleman is your brother, or brother-in-law, or one of your relations ?"

"No, my dear baron, this gentleman is not related to either of us, but he is our friend : M. Louis de Clermont, Comte de Bussy d'Amboise, gentleman of M. de Duc d'Anjou."

At these words the old man, springing to his feet, darted a terrible look at Bussy, and then, as if exhausted by this mute defiance, fell back exhausted on his chair with a groan.

"What is the meaning of this ?" asked Jeanne.

"Does the baron know you, M. de Bussy ?" inquired Saint-Luc.

"This is the first time I have had the honor of meeting M. de Méridor," was the composed reply of Bussy, who alone understood the effect produced on the old man by the mention of the Duc d'Anjou's name.

"Ah ! you are the Duc d'Anjou's gentleman," said the baron,

"you are the gentleman of that monster, that demon, and you dare to confess it, and you have the audacity to come into my presence!"

"Is he mad?" Saint-Luc asked his wife in a whisper, staring at the baron.

"His grief must have unsettled him," answered Jeanne, alarmed.

M. de Méridor had accompanied the words he had just uttered with a glance even more threatening than the one before, but Bussy, as calm as ever, met it with the same attitude of profound respect, and did not reply.

"Yes, that monster," continued M. de Méridor, becoming more and more excited, "that assassin who has murdered my daughter."

"Poor old man!" murmured Bussy.

"But what does he mean?" asked Jeanne, looking round.

"You stare at me with terrified eyes, but ah! you do not know," cried M. de Méridor, taking the hands of Jeanne and Saint-Luc and clasping them within his own. "The Duc d'Anjou has killed my Diane! the Duc d'Anjou. O my child! my daughter! he has killed her!"

And there was such pathos in the old man's voice as he uttered these words that the tears came to the eyes of Bussy himself.

"My dear baron," said the young woman, "though this were so, and I do not understand how it can be, it is impossible to charge M. de Bussy with this frightful misfortune, for he is the most loyal and noble-hearted gentleman living. Surely it is clear that M. de Bussy does not comprehend the meaning of what you say; look, he is weeping as we are, and for the same reason. Would he be here if he expected such a reception as you are giving him? Oh! dear Seigneur Augustin, in the name of your beloved Diane, tell us how this catastrophe has occurred."

"Then you did not know!" said the baron, addressing Bussy.

Bussy inclined without answering.

"Oh! surely no," exclaimed Jeanne, "every one was ignorant of this event."

"My Diane dead and her best friend ignorant of her death! But it is true I have not written of it to any one. It seemed to me as if the world ceased to exist when my daughter

no longer lived; it seemed to me as if the entire universe must have gone into mourning for my Diane."

"Speak, speak, it will relieve you," said Jeanne.

"Well," said the old man, sobbing, "that infamous prince, that dishonor to the nobility of France, saw my Diane, and, finding her beautiful, had her abducted and brought to the castle of Beaugé, intending to treat her as he would have treated the daughter of a serf. My Diane, my pure and noble Diane, preferred death. She flung herself from a window into the lake, and all that was found of her was her veil floating on the surface of the water."

And the tears and sobs of the old man while uttering the last sentence made the scene one of the most painful ever witnessed by Bussy, though he was a warrior and accustomed to shed blood and to see it shed.

Jeanne, who was almost fainting, looked at the count with a kind of dread.

"Oh, count, this is horrible, is it not?" cried Saint-Luc. "You must abandon that infamous prince. You have too noble a heart to remain the friend of a ravisher and an assassin."

The baron, somewhat soothed by these words, awaited the reply of Bussy, in order to form an opinion of that gentleman; the sympathetic words of Saint-Luc consoled him somewhat. A great moral crisis is often accompanied by great physical weakness, and a child bitten by a favorite dog will find some relief for its pain in seeing the dog that bit it beaten.

But Bussy, instead of answering Saint-Luc's appeal, advanced to M. de Méridor.

"M. le Baron," said he, "would you do me the honor of granting me a private interview?"

"Listen to M. de Bussy, my dear baron," said Jeanne, "you will see that he is good and will help you."

"Speak, monsieur," said the baron, trembling, for he perceived a strange significance in the expression of the young man's eyes.

Bussy turned to Saint-Luc and his wife, and addressing them in a tone of mingled dignity and kindness.

"Will you allow me?" said he.

The husband and wife left the room arm in arm, and feeling doubly thankful for their happiness in presence of so great a calamity.

When the door closed behind them, Bussy approached the baron and, with a profound inclination, said :

" M. le Baron, you have just accused a prince whom I serve of a crime, and your accusation has been made in such violent terms that I am forced to ask you for an explanation."

The old man started.

" Oh, do not misunderstand the entirely respectful meaning of my words ; I speak them with the deepest sympathy, and it is with the most earnest desire to mitigate your sorrow that I say to you now : M. le Baron, tell me all the details of the lamentable catastrophe you have just related to Monsieur and Madame de Saint-Luc. Are you quite sure that everything has occurred in the manner you suppose and that all hope is lost ? "

" Monsieur," returned the baron, " I had once a moment's hope. A noble and loyal gentleman, M. de Monsoreau, loved my daughter and did his best to save her."

" M. de Monsoreau, indeed ! Would you mind telling me what has been his conduct in this matter ? "

" Ah ! his conduct has been chivalrous and noble, for Diane had refused his hand. Yet he was the first to warn me of the duke's infamous projects. It was he who showed me how to foil them. He asked only one reward for rescuing my daughter, and in this he proved the generosity and uprightness of his soul : he asked, should he succeed in delivering her from the Duc d'Anjou, that I should give her to him in marriage, for only with a young, active, enterprising husband could she be saved from the prince, as her poor father was unable to protect her.

" I gave my consent joyfully ; but, alas ! it was in vain ; he came too late, and only found my poor Diane saved from dishonor by death."

" And has M. de Monsoreau sent you any intelligence since that fatal moment ? " asked Bussy.

" It is but a month since this happened," said the old man, " and the poor gentleman has evidently not dared to appear before me after failing in his generous purpose."

Bussy bent his head ; all was now plain to him.

He saw how it was that M. de Monsoreau had succeeded in carrying off from the prince the woman he loved, and how his fear of the prince discovering this young girl to be his own wife led him to spread the report of her death.

"And now, monsieur?" queried the baron, perceiving that the young man was absorbed in his thoughts and that his eyes, which had flashed more than once during the narrative, were riveted on the floor.

"And now, M. le Baron," answered Bussy, "I am commissioned by Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou to conduct you to Paris, where his Highness would speak with you."

"What! speak to me!" cried the baron. "What! look on that man's face after the death of my daughter! And what might this murderer want to say to me?"

"Who knows? Justify himself, perhaps."

"And though he could justify himself, monsieur, I should not go to Paris. No, no, it would be going too far from the spot where my child rests in her cold and watery grave."

"M. le Baron," said Bussy, firmly, "you must allow me to insist; it is my duty to conduct you to Paris, and I have come here expressly for that purpose."

"Well, then, I will go to Paris," cried the old man, trembling with anger; "but woe to those who have ruined me! The King shall hear me, or, if he refuses, I will appeal to all the gentlemen in France. And, by the way," he murmured in a lower tone, "I was forgetting in my sorrow that I have a weapon in my hand I have never had occasion to use until now. Yes, M. de Bussy, I will accompany you."

"And I, M. le Baron," said Bussy, taking his hand, "recommend to you the patience, calmness, and dignity that beseem a Christian nobleman. God is infinitely merciful to righteous hearts, and you know not what he has in store for you. I beg you also, while waiting for the day when his mercy shall be showered on you, not to reckon me among your enemies, for you know not what I am about to do for you. Till to-morrow, then, baron; and early in the morning we will start on our journey."

"I consent," replied the old nobleman, moved, in spite of himself, by the soft tones in which Bussy spoke; "but, meanwhile, friend or enemy, you are my guest, and I will escort you to your apartments."

And the baron seized a three-branched silver candlestick, and, with a heavy step, preceded Bussy d'Amboise up the principal staircase of the castle.

The dogs wished to follow; he stopped them with a gesture. Two servants followed Bussy with other candlesticks.

On arriving at the threshold of the room assigned him, the count asked what had become of M. de Saint-Luc and his wife.

"My old Germain has taken care of them," answered the baron. "I trust you will pass a pleasant night, M. le Comte."

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW RÉMY LE HAUDOUIN LEARNED WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THE HOUSE IN THE RUE SAINT-ANTOINE DURING BUSSY'S ABSENCE.

MONSIEUR AND MADAME DE SAINT-LUC were astounded. Bussy in the confidence of M. de Méridor! Bussy leaving for Paris with the old man! Bussy, in fine, suddenly assuming the direction of those affairs that were at first utterly foreign and strange to him! All this was to these young people an inexplicable phenomenon.

In the case of the baron, the magic power of that title: "Royal Highness," had wrought its ordinary effect; a gentleman of the time of Henry III. could hardly be expected to smile at scutcheons and differences of station.

"Royal Highness" meant for M. de Méridor, as it did, indeed, for every one except the King, something to be reverenced and even feared.

On the appointed morning, the baron took leave of his guests, bidding them to consider the castle theirs. But Saint-Luc and his wife were quite alive to the gravity of the situation and were determined to depart from Méridor whenever they conveniently could. As soon as the timid Maréchal de Brissac consented, they would settle down on the Brissac estate, which was but a short distance from Méridor.

As for Bussy, he could have justified his singular conduct in a second; Bussy, master of a secret he could reveal to whomsoever he pleased, resembled one of those Oriental sorcerers, who, with the first wave of their wand draw tears from every eye, and, with the second, convulse their audience with laughter.

The second which, as we have said, would have been all Bussy required to work such wondrous transformations was

utilized by him for the dropping of a few words into the ear which the charming wife of Saint-Luc held greedily to his lips.

These few words uttered, Jeanne's countenance brightened up marvellously; a lovely tint colored her cheeks and brow, and the coral of her lips opened to disclose her little white teeth, which glistened like pearls; her bewildered spouse looked at her inquiringly, but she laid a finger on her mouth and fled, blowing a kiss of gratitude to Bussy on the way.

The old man had seen nothing of this expressive pantomime. With his eyes riveted on his ancestral manor, he caressed in an absent-minded way his two dogs, who could hardly be got to leave him. He gave some directions to his servants, who, with bent heads, awaited his orders and his farewells. Then, mounting with his groom's assistance, and with great difficulty, and old piebald horse of which he was very fond, for it had been his warhorse in the late civil wars, he saluted the castle of Méridor with a gesture, and started without a word.

Bussy, with sparkling eyes, replied to the smiles of Jeanne, and frequently turned round to bid good-by to his friends. As he was quitting the castle, Jeanne had said to him in a whisper:

"What a singular man you are, Seigneur Count! I promised you that you should find happiness in Méridor. And it is you, on the contrary, who are bringing back to Méridor the happiness that had fled from it."

It is a long road from Méridor to Paris, long, especially, to an old man riddled with musket-balls and slashed with sword-cuts in rough conflicts from which no warrior emerged unwounded. It was a long road also to that dignified piebald who answered to the name of Garnac and proudly raised his head when called by it, with a haughty flash still in his weary eyes.

Once started, Bussy set about capturing the heart of this old man, who had at first hated him, and his filial care and attentions had doubtless some success, for on the morning of the sixth day, just as they were entering Paris, M. de Méridor said to his travelling companion these words, words significant of the change the journey had wrought in his mind:

"It is singular, count; I am nearer than ever to the source of my misfortunes, and yet I feel less anxiety at the end than I did at the beginning of my journey."

"In two hours more, M. le Baron," said Bussy, "you shall have judged me as I would be judged by you."

The travellers entered Paris by the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, as did almost every one at the time, because this horrible quarter, the ugliest in the city, seemed the most Parisian of all, on account of its numerous churches, its thousand picturesque houses and its little bridges built over sewers.

"Where are we going?" asked the baron; "to the Louvre, I suppose."

"Monsieur," said Bussy, "I must ask you to come first to my hotel. After you have had some refreshment and repose you will be in a better condition to meet in a becoming manner the person I am leading you to."

The baron was patient and submissive, and Bussy brought him to the hotel in the Rue de Grenelle Saint-Honoré.

The count's people were not expecting him, or rather, no longer expected him: returning in the night through a little door of which he alone had the key, he had saddled his horse himself and left without seeing any one, except Rémy le Haudouin. It can be easily understood, therefore, that his sudden disappearance, the dangers he had encountered during the preceding week, sufficiently evidenced by his wound, and his adventurous disposition, which was incorrigible, had all led many to believe that he had fallen into some trap laid by his enemies, that fortune, so long on his side, had deserted him, and that Bussy had died in silence and loneliness, shot by an arquebuse or pierced by a dagger.

So dubious were his best friends and most faithful servants of his situation that some of them were offering up novenas for his return to the light of day, a return that seemed to them more hazardous than that of Pyrithoüs; while others, more certain of his fate, and expecting to discover only his dead body, were making the most minute investigations in sewers and suspicious-looking cellars, in the quarries outside the city, in the bed of the Bièvre and the ditches of the Bastile.

When inquiries were made at his hotel, a certain person was always ready with this answer:

"M. le Comte is well."

But if the questions were pushed further, this person replied that he had told all he knew, and the questioner had to be content.

Now this person, who had to submit to many insults and

ironical compliments, because of the brevity of his cheerful assurance, was no other than Maître Rémy le Haudouin, who was in and out of the hotel several times a day and several times a night as well, always returning in high spirits and communicating a little of his own gayety to the gloomy mansion.

Le Haudouin, after one of his disappearances, returned to the hotel just at the moment when shouts of joy were resounding from the court of honor, where the lackeys were throwing themselves on Bussy's horse, ready to fight for the privilege of being his groom, for the count, instead of alighting, remained on horseback.

"Oh, I am aware you are glad to see me alive," said Bussy; "thanks. But you are not quite sure it is really I; well, see, touch, but do so quickly. Good; now help that gentleman from his horse, and be careful about it, for I wish you to know I reverence him more than a prince."

Bussy sounded the praises of the old man just in the nick of time; the servants at first paid hardly any attention to him; his modest garb, quite out of the fashion, and his piebald horse could hardly be expected to be looked on with respect by people who put the horses of the magnificent Bussy every day through their paces, and so they were tempted to regard the baron as some retired provincial squire their adventurous lord had brought out of exile as out of another world.

But no sooner had Bussy spoken than all were in a hurry to wait upon the old man. Le Haudouin looked on, laughing in his sleeve according to his custom, and only the gravity of his master could reduce the gay young doctor to a becoming seriousness.

"Quick, a room for monseigneur," said Bussy.

"Which one?" asked half a dozen voices together.

"The best — my own."

And he offered his arm to the baron as the latter was ascending the staircase, doing his best to show him even more honor than had been shown himself.

M. de Méridor found it impossible to resist this winning courtesy, just as we find it impossible to keep from gliding down the slope of certain dreams which conduct us to those fantastic countries, the realms of imagination and night.

The count's golden goblet was set before the baron, and Bussy was about to crown it with the wine of hospitality.

"Thanks, thanks, monsieur," said the old man; "but are we going soon to the appointed interview?"

"Yes, soon; do not be uneasy, M. de Méridor, this meeting will bring happiness not only to you but to me."

"What are you saying, and how is it you are always speaking a language I do not understand?"

"I say, monseigneur, that I have spoken to you of a Providence that is merciful to noble hearts, and that the moment is drawing nigh when I shall, in your name, appeal to that Providence."

The baron looked at Bussy in bewilderment; but, with a respectful gesture that meant: I return in a moment, Bussy smilingly bowed himself out.

As he expected, Rémy was at the door; he took the young man's arm and led him into a study.

"Well, my dear Hippocrates," he inquired, "how do matters stand at present?"

"Matters where?"

"*Parbleu!* in the Rue Saint-Antoine."

"Monseigneur, we are at a point that, I presume, must have an interest for you; but otherwise there is nothing new."

Bussy breathed.

"Then the husband has n't returned?" said he.

"Oh, yes, he has, but met with no success. There is a father in the business, and his appearance, it seems, is expected to clinch the matter; he is the god who is to descend some fine morning in a machine, and this unknown god, in the person of an absent father, is looked forward to impatiently."

"Good," said Bussy; "but how do you know all that?"

"Well, monseigneur," answered Rémy, in his usual frank, lively fashion, "you see your absence turned my position into a sinecure for the time; I wanted to improve the moments left me for your advantage."

"Tell me what you have done, then, my dear Rémy; I am listening."

"With pleasure. After you left, I got some money, books, and a sword together, and brought them to a little room I had hired in a house at the corner of the Rue Saint-Antoine and the Rue Saint-Catherine."

"Good!"

"From there I had a full view of the house you know of — could see everything from the ventilators to the chimneys."

"Very good, indeed!"

"As soon as I was in my room, I took my post at the window."

"Splendid!"

"Yes; but the splendidness was marred by a little difficulty.

"I saw that I was seen; and, on the whole, it was quite natural it should look a little suspicious for a man to be always gazing on the same prospect; such persistence would result in his being taken, at the end of two or three days, for a thief, a lover, a spy, or a madman" —

"Admirably reasoned, my dear Rémy; and what did you do then?"

"Oh, then, M. le Comte, I perceived the time had come for desperate remedies, and, faith" —

"What?"

"I fell in love!"

"You fell in love?" inquired Bussy, puzzled to know how his falling in love could help him.

"Fell in love," repeated the young doctor, "as I have the honor of telling you; oh! deeply in love, madly in love."

"With whom?"

"With Gertrude."

"Gertrude, Madame de Monsoreau's maid?"

"Well, yes, no doubt about it,— with Madame de Monsoreau's *maid.* I am not a gentleman, monseigneur; you don't expect me to fall in love with the mistresses, do you? I am but a poor little doctor with a single patient, and I hope that patient will need my services only at exceedingly long intervals; so, whatever experiments I make must be made *in anima vili,* as we used to say at the Sorbonne."

"My poor Rémy," said Bussy, "you are pretty sure I appreciate your devotion, are you not?"

"Well, after all, I am not so much to be pitied, monseigneur," answered Le Haudouin. "Gertrude is a fine slip of a girl, just two inches taller than myself, and able to lift me from the ground by the collar of my coat with her own two hands, which phenomenon finds its explanation in the extraordinary development of the muscles of her biceps and her deltoïd. All this has inspired me with a veneration for the maiden which flatters her, and, as I am always of her opinion, we never quarrel. Then she has a priceless talent" —

"What is it, my poor Rémy?"

"She has marvellous skill in narrative."

"Ah! you don't say so?"

"Yes, indeed; and so, through her, I know all that passes in the house of her mistress. Ha! what do you say to that? It struck me you might not be displeased to have the means of learning what was going on there."

"Le Haudouin, you are the good genius whom chance, or rather Providence, has thrown in my way. Then you and Gertrude are on terms of"—

"*Puella me diligit*," replied Rémy, strutting about with an air of affected dandyism.

"And you are received in the house."

"Last night, at twelve, I effected my first entrance, on tiptoe, by the famous wicket door you know of."

"And how did you win this happiness?"

"Oh, in the most natural way. I suppose I ought to tell you."

"Yes, do."

"Two days after you left, and on the next morning after I took possession of my little room, I stood at the door, waiting for the lady of my future thoughts to go a-marketing, which, I was aware, happened every day between eight and nine. At ten minutes past eight exactly, she made her appearance; whereupon, I descended from my observatory and hastened to place myself on her path."

"And she recognized you?"

"I should say she did: she gave a scream and fled!"

"And then?"

"Then I ran after her, and came up with her. I had to put my best leg foremost, though; she 's a fast racer. But, luckily, a petticoat is sometimes embarrassing.

"'Good God!' she cried.

"'Holy Virgin!' I shouted.

"My exclamation gave her a good opinion of me; a person of less piety would have cried: '*Morbleu!*' or '*Corbœuf!*'

"'The doctor!' she said.

"'The charming housekeeper!' I answered.

"She smiled, but recovering herself—

"'You are mistaken, monsieur,' said she, 'I do not know you.'

"'But, alas!' I returned, 'I know you, and, for the last

three days I live, I exist but for you. To such a degree do I adore you that I no longer dwell in the Rue Beautreillis, and I am now in the Rue Saint-Antoine, corner of the Rue Saint-Catherine, having changed my lodgings solely in the hope of seeing you come out and go in. Should you again need my services in dressing the wounds of handsome young gentlemen you must look for me at my new residence and not at the old one.'

"'Hush!' she said.

"'Ah, you see you know me!' I answered.

"And that is how our acquaintance was made, or rather, renewed."

"So that now you are" —

"As happy as a lover can be — with Gertrude, you understand; everything is relative. But I am more than happy, I am simply in ecstasies at the thought that I have succeeded in doing for you what I proposed doing."

"But will she not suspect?"

"No, I have not even spoken of you. Now, is it a likely thing that such a poor creature as Rémy le Haudouin should be acquainted with noble lords like the Seigneur de Bussy? No, all I did was to ask her once, in an offhand way: 'Is your young master better?'

"'What young master?' she said.

"'The gentleman I attended in your house?'

"'He is not my young master,' she answered.

"'Oh, as he was in your mistress's bed, I thought' —

"'Mercy on us! no; poor young man!' she sighed, 'he was nothing to us at all, and we have only seen him once since.'

"'Then you do not know his name?' I inquired.

"'Oh, yes, we do, indeed!'

"'You might have known and forgotten it?'

"'It is not one of those names you forget.'

"'Why, what is it, then?'

"'Have you ever heard of the Seigneur de Bussy?'

"'I should think so! Bussy, so it was the brave Bussy?'

"'Yes, it was he.'

"'Hum! and the lady?'

"'My mistress is married, monsieur.'

"'Oh, a woman may be married and may be faithful, yet think, now and then, of some handsome young man she has

seen — were it but for a moment, especially when that handsome young man was wounded, interesting, and lying in our bed.'

"'Well, to be frank with you,' answered Gertrude, 'I will not say my mistress does not think of him.'"

Bussy's face flushed all over.

"'We even talk about him,' added Gertrude, 'whenever we are alone.'"

"Excellent girl!" cried the count.

"'And what do you say of him,' I asked.

"'I speak of his feats of valor, and that is not difficult, since nothing is talked about in Paris but the sword thrusts he gives and receives. I even taught my mistress a little song concerning him which is all the rage at present.'

"'Ah, I know it,' I answered, 'does it not run thus? —

"'"As a picker of quarrels
D'Amboise has won laurels
Yet — give Bussy his due —
He is tender and true!"'

"'The way it runs, exactly!' exclaimed Gertrude. 'Well! my mistress sings nothing else now.'"

Bussy wrung the young doctor's hand; an ineffable thrill of happiness coursed through his veins.

"Is that all?" he asked, so insatiable is man in his desires.

"That is all, monseigneur. Oh, I 'll learn more later on; but, confound it! one can't learn everything in a day — or rather, in a night."

CHAPTER XXV.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

Rémy's report made Bussy very happy; and naturally, for it told him two things: M. de Monsoreau was as much hated as ever, and he, Bussy, was already better liked than formerly.

And then, the friendship of this young man for him was a joy to his heart. Our entire being expands under the influence of heaven-born sentiments, and our intellectual powers acquire a twofold strength. We feel we are happy, because we feel we are good.

Bussy saw that there was no time to be lost now, and that every pang which rended the old man's heart was almost a sacrilege. There is such an inversion of the laws of nature in the tears of a father for a daughter's death, that he who could console that father with a word, yet withholds that word, deserves the curse of every father.

On descending into the court, M. de Méridor found a fresh horse which Bussy had ordered to be got ready for him. Another horse was waiting for Bussy; both of them were soon in the saddle, and set out, followed by Rémy.

They turned into the Rue Saint-Antoine, their progress being a source of ever-increasing astonishment to M. de Méridor. The worthy nobleman had not been in Paris for twenty years, and what with the noise of horses and the cries of lackeys and the passage of coaches, all in greater numbers than he had ever had any experience of before, he found Paris very much changed since Henri II's. time.

But in spite of his astonishment, which bordered closely on admiration, the baron did not feel the less sad, and his sadness increased as he approached the unknown goal of his journey. How would the duke receive him, and would this interview be but the precursor of new sorrows?

Then, as he glanced at Bussy from time to time, he wondered what strange hallucination had forced him to follow blindly the servant of a prince to whom he owed all his misfortunes. Would it not have been more consistent with his dignity to have braved the Duc d'Anjou, and instead of accompanying Bussy wherever the latter chose to lead him, to have gone straight to the Louvre and thrown himself at the feet of the King? What could the prince say to him? What consolation could he give him? Was he not one of those who try to assuage with the balsam of honeyed words the pain of the wounds they have made, wounds that bleed with a sharper agony when the sufferer is outside their presence?

In this way they reached the Rue Saint-Paul. Bussy, like a prudent captain, sent Rémy in advance with orders to reconnoitre the approaches and lay plans for entering the fortress.

Rémy, after seeing Gertrude, returned with the intelligence that there was no sign of the enemy either in the alley or on the staircase or corridor that led to Madame de Monsoreau's chamber.

All these consultations, as will be easily understood, were held in a low voice between Bussy and Le Haudouin.

During this time the baron was looking in amazement around him.

"Is it possible," he wondered, "that the Duc d'Anjou can lodge in such a place as this?"

And the shabby appearance of the house inspired him with a feeling of distrust.

"No, monseigneur," answered Bussy, with a smile, "but though it is not his residence, it is that of a lady he has loved."

The old gentleman's brow became clouded.

"Monsieur," he said, halting, "we provincials are not used to things of this sort, the easy morals of Paris frighten us, and we do not feel at all comfortable in presence of your mysteries. If the Duc d'Anjou desires to meet the Baron de Méridor, he must meet him in his palace and not in the house of one of his mistresses. And then," added the old man, with a heavy sigh, "why do you, who seem an honest man, attempt to confront me with one of his women? Is it for the purpose of assuring me that my poor Diane would be alive still, if, like the mistress of yonder abode, she had preferred shame to death?"

"Come, come, M. le Baron," said Bussy, with that frank, loyal smile which had been his best auxiliary in gaining an influence over the old man, "do not hazard false conjectures. I pledge you my honor as a gentleman. You are altogether mistaken in your surmises. The lady you are about to see is a perfectly virtuous lady, who is worthy of all your respect."

"But who is she?"

"She is — the wife of a gentleman with whom you are acquainted."

"Really? But why do you say the prince has loved her?"

"Because I always say the truth, M. le Baron; enter and you will see for yourself whether I have accomplished what I promised you."

"Take care, I was weeping for my darling child, and you said: 'Be consoled, monsieur, the mercies of God are great;' to promise that I should be consoled was almost to promise a miracle."

"Enter, monsieur," repeated Bussy, with the smile that always fascinated the old gentleman.

The baron dismounted.

Gertrude had run to the door and stood open-mouthed on the threshold. She stared in dismay at Rémy, Bussy, and the old man, utterly unable to understand how Providence had contrived to bring these three men together.

"Inform Madame de Monsoreau," said the count, "that M. de Bussy has returned and desires to speak to her immediately. But, for your life," he whispered, "do not say a word of the person who is with me."

"Madame de Monsoreau!" said the baron, astounded, "Madame de Monsoreau!

"Enter, M. le Baron," said Bussy, pushing him into the alley.

Then, as the old man climbed the stairs with tottering steps, was heard the voice of Diane, who was answering in tones that trembled strangely:

"M. de Bussy, you say, Gertrude? M. de Bussy? Very well, show him in."

"That voice!" cried the baron, suddenly stopping in the middle of the stairs. "That voice! Great God!"

"Go on, M. le Baron," said Bussy.

But at that very moment, just as the baron was clinging to the banisters and looking around him, at the head of the stairs, in the dazzling sheen of a golden sunlight, appeared Diane, more beautiful than ever, with a smile on her lips, although she little expected to see her father.

At this sight, which he took for some magic vision, the old man uttered a terrible cry, and with arms outstretched, with haggard eyes, he presented such a perfect image of horror and delirium that Diane, who was ready to fall upon his neck, paused in wonder and dismay.

The old man's hand, as he extended it, came in contact with Bussy's shoulder, and he leaned on it.

"Diane alive!" he murmured. "Diane, my own Diane, whom I thought dead. O God! O God!"

And this robust warrior, — this doughty hero of foreign and civil wars, from which he had almost escaped unscathed, — this aged oak left standing by the lightning-stroke of Diane's death, — this athlete who had wrestled so energetically with sorrow, — was crushed, broken, annihilated by joy; his knees sank under him, he was falling backwards, and but for Bussy would have been hurled to the bottom of the staircase, and all

because of the sight of that beloved image that shone, blurred and confused, before his eyes.

"Good heavens! M. de Bussy," cried Diane, hurrying down the steps that separated her from her father, "what is the matter with my father?"

And the young woman, terrified by his livid aspect and the strange effect produced by a meeting for which she thought they had both been prepared, questioned with her eyes even more than with her voice.

"M. de Méridor believed you dead, and he wept for you, madame, as such a father should weep for such a daughter."

"What!" cried Diane, "and did no one undeceive him?"

"No one."

"Oh, no one, no one!" cried the old man, awakening from his passing stupor, "no one, not even M. de Bussy."

"Ungrateful!" said the young gentleman, in a tone of mild reproach.

"Oh, yes," answered the baron, "yes, you are right, for this is a moment which repays me for all my sorrows. Oh, Diane! Diane! my darling!" he continued, drawing his daughter's head to his lips with one hand and offering the other to Bussy.

Then suddenly drawing himself up, as if a painful memory or a new fear had penetrated to his heart in spite of the armor of joy, which, if we may use the expression, had just enveloped him, he said:

"But what was that you were saying, M. de Bussy, about going to see Madame de Monsoreau? Where is she?"

"Alas! father," murmured Diane.

Bussy collected all his strength.

"She is before you," said he "and the Comte de Monsoreau is your son-in-law."

"Eh? what?" stammered the old man, "M. de Monsoreau my son-in-law, and everybody, — even you yourself, Diane, — has left me in ignorance of it."

"I dreaded writing to you, father, for fear the letter should fall into the prince's hands. Besides, I thought you knew everything."

"But what is the meaning of it all? Why all these strange mysteries?"

"Yes, father," cried Diane, "why has M. de Monsoreau allowed you to think I was dead? Why has he left you in ignorance of the fact that he was my husband?"

The baron, trembling, as if he feared to sound the depths of this dark secret, looked inquiringly, but timidly, into his daughter's sparkling eyes, and then at the keen, melancholy face of Bussy.

During all this time they had been moving slowly to the drawing-room.

"M. de Monsoreau my son-in-law!" the baron continued to repeat, utterly bewildered.

"That should not surprise you," answered Diane, in a tone of gentle reproach; "did you not order me to marry him, father?"

"Yes, if he saved you."

"Well! he has saved me," said Diane, in a hollow voice, falling back on a seat near her *prie-Dieu;* "if not from misfortune, at least from shame."

"Then why did he let me believe you dead, when he knew how bitter was my grief?" repeated the old man. "Why did he let me die of despair, when one word, yes, a single word, would have restored me to life?"

"Oh! there is some treacherous snare hidden beneath all this," cried Diane, "But you will not leave me, father? You will protect me, M. de Bussy, will you not?"

"Alas! madame," answered Bussy, bowing, "it is no longer possible for me to enter into your family secrets. In view of the strange manœuvres of your husband, it was my duty to find you a protector you could acknowledge. In search of that protector, I went to Méridor. You are now with your father; I withdraw."

"He is right," said the old man, sadly.

"M. de Monsoreau was afraid of the Duc d'Anjou's anger, and M. de Bussy is afraid of it now."

Diane flashed a glance at the young man, and this glance signified:

"Are you whom they call 'the brave Bussy' afraid, like M. de Monsoreau, of the Duc d'Anjou?"

Bussy understood that glance and smiled.

"M. le Baron," said he, "excuse, I beg, this singular question I am about to ask, and you, madame, pardon me, in consideration of my desire to render you a service."

Father and daughter exchanged a look and waited.

"M. le Baron," resumed Bussy, "I will entreat you to ask Madame de Monsoreau" —

And he emphasized the last three words in a way that drove the color from the young woman's cheek. Bussy saw Diane's distress, and continued :

"Ask your daughter if she be happy in the marriage she contracted in obedience to your orders."

Diane wrung her hands and sobbed. It was the only reply she could give to Bussy. It is true, however, that no other reply could be so positive.

The eyes of the old baron filled with tears. He was at last aware that his too hasty friendship for Monsoreau was the chief cause of his daughter's unhappiness.

"Now," said Bussy, "is it true, M. le Baron, that, enforced by treachery or violence, you gave your daughter's hand to M. de Monsoreau ?"

"Yes, if he saved her."

"And he did save her. Then it is needless for me to ask, monsieur, if you intend to keep your promise ?"

"To keep a promise is a law for all, but especially for gentlemen, as you must know better than anybody else, M. de Bussy. M. de Monsoreau has, by her own admission, saved my daughter's life ; then my daughter must belong to M. de Monsoreau."

"Ah !" murmured the young woman, "would I were dead !"

"Madame," said Bussy, "you see I was right and have nothing further to do here. M. le Baron promised you to M. de Monsoreau, and you yourself also promised him your hand whenever you saw your father again safe and well."

"Ah ! M. de Bussy, do not rend my heart," said the young woman, approaching the count ; "my father does not know that I fear this man ; my father does not know that I hate him ; my father persists in regarding this man as my savior, and I, enlightened by my instincts, regard him as my executioner."

"Diane ! Diane !" cried the baron, "he saved you !"

"Yes," exclaimed Bussy, whom prudence and delicacy had restrained until now, "yes, but what if the danger were less great than you supposed ? what if this danger were unreal ? what if — but what do we know, really ? Listen, baron, there is some mystery in all this which requires to be dispelled, and which I will dispel. But I protest to you that if I had had the happiness of standing in M. de Monsoreau's place, I would have saved your beautiful and innocent daughter from dis-

honor, and, by the God who hears me, I never should have dreamed of exacting from her a price for such a service."

"He loved her," said M. le Baron, who, nevertheless, saw how odious had been M. de Monsoreau's conduct, "and many things done for the sake of love may be excused."

"And what about me!" cried Bussy, "may not I!" —

But frightened at the thought of what was about to escape from his heart, Bussy stopped; however, the thought that sparkled in his eyes completed the phrase that had been interrupted on his lips.

Diane read it there, read it more clearly than if it had been spoken.

"Well!" she said, blushing, "you have understood me, have you not? Friend, brother! — two titles you have claimed and which I freely grant — ah! my friend and brother, can you do anything for me?"

"But the Duc d'Anjou! the Duc d'Anjou!" murmured the old man, who considered the wrath of a royal prince to be fully as dangerous as a thunderbolt.

"I am not one of those who fear the anger of princes, M. le Baron," replied the young man; "and I am very much mistaken if we have to dread any such anger. If you wish, M. de Méridor, I will make you and the prince such friends that he will protect you against M. de Monsoreau, from whom comes, believe me, the real danger, a danger unknown but certain, invisible but, perhaps, inevitable."

"But if the duke learns Diane is alive all is lost," said the old man.

"Well, well, then," said Bussy, "I see, notwithstanding what I have said, your belief in M. de Monsoreau is stronger than your belief in me. It is useless to talk of the matter further; you may reject my offer, M. le Baron, you may fling away the powerful protection I can summon to your aid, and throw yourself into the arms of the man who has so well justified your confidence. As I have said before, I have accomplished my task, I have nothing further to do here. Adieu, monseigneur, adieu, madame, you will never see me more."

"Oh!" cried Diane, taking the young man by the hand, "have you ever seen me waver for an instant? have you ever seen me give way to him? No. I beg you on my knees, M. de Bussy, do not forsake me, do not abandon me."

Bussy seized the beautiful, beseeching hands, and all his

anger melted as melts the snow on the mountain crest beneath the ardent gaze of the sun.

"Then be it so, madame, I am well content!" said Bussy. "Yes, I accept the sacred mission you have confided to me, and in three days — for I must have time to join the prince, who is said to have gone on a pilgrimage to Chartres along with the King — in three days you shall see me again, or the name of Bussy shall never again be spoken."

Then, intoxicated by his feelings, and with flaming eyes, he drew near Diane and whispered:

"We are allied against this Monsoreau; remember it was not he who brought you back your father, and be faithful."

With one parting clasp of the baron's hand, he hurried out of the apartment.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW BROTHER GORENFLOT AWOKE AND HOW HE WAS RECEIVED IN HIS CONVENT.

We left our friend Chicot ecstatically admiring Brother Gorenflot's unbroken sleep and superb snoring; he made a sign to the innkeeper to retire and carry the light with him, after warning him not to say a word to the worthy brother of his departure at ten last evening, and his return at three in the morning.

Now, Maître Bonhomet had noticed that, whatever might be the relation between the monk and the jester, it was always the jester who paid, and so he naturally held the jester in great respect, while, on the contrary, he held the monk in but slight esteem.

Consequently, he promised not to let a single syllable cross his lips about the events of the night, and retired, leaving the two friends in darkness, as he had been ordered.

Chicot soon became aware of a fact that aroused his admiration: Brother Gorenflot snored and spoke at the same time, which phenomenon argued, not as might be supposed, a conscience stung with remorse, but a stomach overladen with creature comforts.

The words uttered by Gorenflot in his sleep, when tagged

together, formed a frightful mixture of sacred eloquence and bacchanalian maxims.

However, Chicot saw it would be almost impossible, in such palpable darkness, to restore Gorenflot his belongings and at the same time keep him from suspecting anything when he awoke; he might step imprudently, during the operation, on some one of the monk's four limbs, for he could not discern their exact position, and so might startle him out of his lethargy.

Chicot, then, blew on the coals in the brazier to light up the room a little.

At the sound of that blowing, Gorenflot stopped snoring and murmured:

"Brethren, this is a mighty wind; it is the wind of the Lord, it is his breath inspiring me."

And he betook himself to snoring again.

Chicot waited a moment for sleep to resume its sway, and then set to work divesting the monk of his wrappers.

"My stars!" said Gorenflot, "but this is a cold day! I'm afraid it will hinder the grapes from ripening."

Chicot stopped in the midst of his work, which he resumed a moment later.

"You know my zeal, brethren," continued the monk, "for the Church and the Duc de Guise."

"You beast!" interjected Chicot.

"You know what my opinions are," resumed Gorenflot, "and it is certain" —

"What is certain?" asked Chicot, as he raised up the monk to put on his frock.

"It is certain that man is stronger than wine. Brother Gorenflot has wrestled with wine as Jacob wrestled with the angel, and Brother Gorenflot has overcome the wine."

Chicot shrugged his shoulders.

This untimely movement made the monk open his eyes. He saw Chicot's face, which, in that weird light, looked wan and sinister.

"Ah!" said the monk, "I won't have any ghosts or hobgoblins!" as if he were remonstrating with some familiar demon who was not keeping his engagements.

"He is dead drunk," said Chicot, getting the frock on him at last and pulling the cowl over his head.

"Aha!" grumbled the monk, "the sacristan has closed the door of the choir and the wind has stopped blowing in."

"Whether you keep awake or go to sleep now," said Chicot, "is all one to me."

"The Lord has heard my prayer," murmured the monk, "and the north wind which he sent to freeze the vines is changed to a gentle zephyr."

"Amen!" said Chicot.

And making a pillow of the napkins and a sheet of the table-cloth, after arranging the empty bottles and dirty dishes as they would naturally be scattered about, he lay down to sleep beside his companion.

The strong sunlight that beat upon his eyelids, and the echo of the shrill voice of the innkeeper scolding the scullions in the kitchen, at length pierced the thick vapor which had paralyzed the senses of Gorenflot.

He turned, and with the aid of his own two hands, managed to settle down on that part which prescient nature hath given to man to be his principal centre of gravity.

Having achieved this result triumphantly, though not without difficulty, Gorenflot's eyes rested contemplatively on the significant disorder in which lay plates and dishes and bottles, then on Chicot, one of whose arms was gracefully flung over his eyes in such a manner that he saw everything and did not lose a single movement of the monk, while the perfectly natural way in which he snored did honor to that talent of his for mimicry to which we have already done justice.

"Broad daylight!" cried the monk; "*corbleu!* broad daylight! Why, I must have spent the night here!"

Then, collecting his ideas:

"And the abbey!" said he; "oh! oh!"

He began tightening the cord of his frock, a task Chicot had not thought he was obliged to attend to.

"Well, well," he muttered, "what a queer kind of dream I had! I thought I was dead and wrapped in a shroud stained with blood."

Gorenflot was not entirely mistaken.

When but half awake, he had taken the table-cloth in which he was bundled up for a shroud and the spots of wine on it for drops of blood.

"Luckily, it was but a dream," said Gorenflot, with another glance around the room.

During this inspection his eyes again rested on Chicot, who, feeling the eyes of the monk on him, snored with redoubled force.

"Is n't a drunkard a splendid creature!" said Gorenflot, admiringly.

"How happy he must be to sleep so soundly!" he added. "Ah! he 's not in such a pickle as I 'm in!"

And he sighed as loudly as Chicot snored, so that, if the jester had been really asleep, it must have wakened him.

"What if I were to rouse him up and ask his advice?" thought the monk. "He is a man of good counsel."

Chicot exerted all his powers, and his snores, which had attained the pitch of an organ diapason, swelled to a thunder roar.

"No," resumed Gorenflot, "he 'd have the upper hand of me ever after, and I ought to be able to invent a decent lie myself."

"But whatever lie I invent," continued the monk, "it will be no easy thing for me to escape the dungeon, and the bread and water that will follow. If I even had a little money to bribe the brother jailer!"

Which hearing, Chicot adroitly drew a rather well-filled purse from his pocket and slipped it under his back.

The precaution was not useless; with a longer face than ever, Gorenflot approached his friend and murmured these melancholy words:

"If he were awake he would not refuse me a crown; but his repose is sacred to me and must not be disturbed — I 'll take it."

And thereupon, Brother Gorenflot fell on his knees, leaned over Chicot, and softly felt the sleeper's pockets.

Chicot did not think it a time to follow the example of his companion and appeal to his familiar demon; he let him search at his ease in both pockets of his doublet.

"Strange!" said the monk, "nothing in the pockets! — ah! in the hat, perhaps."

While the monk was investigating the hat, Chicot emptied the purse into his hand, and then slipped it into his breeches' pocket.

"Nothing in the hat!" exclaimed Gorenflot, "that amazes me. My friend Chicot, who is a most sagacious fool, never goes out without money."

"Oho! I have it!" said he, with a smile that distended his mouth from ear to ear, "I was forgetting the breeches."

And, thrusting his hand into Chicot's breeches, he drew out the empty purse.

"Jesus!" he murmured, "and who is to settle the score?"

This thought must have impressed the monk deeply, for he was on his legs in a moment, and, with a somewhat tipsy but rapid step, he made for the door, crossed the kitchen, refusing to enter into talk with the innkeeper, notwithstanding the latter's advances, and fled.

Then Chicot restored his money to his purse, his purse to his pocket, and leaning against the window, already touched by the sunlight, he forgot Gorenflot in a profound meditation.

However, the brother collector pursued his way, with his wallet on his shoulder, and a meditative air on his face that may have struck passers-by as an evidence of the devout workings of his mind; but it was really nothing of the sort. Gorenflot was trying to hit on one of those magnificent lies which laggard monk and soldier are equally clever in inventing, a lie always the same in texture, but embroidered according to the liar's fancy.

As soon as Brother Gorenflot got a glimpse of the convent gates they seemed to him even gloomier-looking than usual, and the presence of several monks conversing at the entrance and anxiously gazing in every direction was not calculated to ease his mind, while the bustle and excitement among them, as soon as they saw him coming out of the Rue Saint-Jacques, gave him one of the greatest frights he had ever had in his life.

"It's of me they're talking; they're pointing at me and waiting for me; they have been searching for me all night; my absence has created a scandal; I'm lost!"

His brain reeled; a wild idea of flight came into his head; but several monks were already running to meet him; they would pursue him undoubtedly. Brother Gorenflot knew his own weak points: he was not cut out for a runner; he would be overtaken, garrotted, and dragged to the convent; he might as well be resigned.

He advanced meekly, then, toward his companions, who seemed to feel a certain hesitation about speaking to him.

"Alas!" sighed Gorenflot, "they pretend not to know me; I am unto them a stumbling-block."

At length one of the monks ventured to approach and said:

"Poor, dear brother!"

Gorenflot heaved a sigh and raised his eyes to heaven.

"You know the prior is waiting for you?" said another.

"Ah! great heavens!"

"Yes," added a third, "he said you were to be brought to him as soon as you entered the convent."

"The very thing I feared," commented Gorenflot.

And, more dead than alive, he entered the gate, which was shut behind him.

"Ah! it's you," cried the brother porter. "Come quick, quick; the reverend prior, Joseph Foulon, is waiting for you."

And the brother porter, taking Gorenflot's hand, led, or rather dragged him, to the prior's room.

There, too, the door was shut behind him.

Gorenflot lowered his eyes, fearing to meet the angry gaze of the abbot; he felt he was alone, abandoned by the world, and about to have an interview with his justly irritated superior.

"Ah, you are here at last," said the abbot.

"Reverend" — stammered the monk.

"What anxiety you have given me!" continued the prior.

"You are very kind, father," answered Gorenflot, astonished at the indulgent tone of his superior, which he did not expect.

"You were afraid to return after last night's scene, I suppose?"

"I confess I did not dare to do so," said the monk, a cold sweat breaking out on his forehead.

"Ah! dear brother, dear brother," said the abbot, "what you did was very imprudent, very rash."

"Let me explain, father."

"Oh, what need is there of explaining? Your sally" —

"If there is no need of explaining," said Gorenflot, "so much the better, for it would be a difficult task for me to do so."

"I can readily understand that you were carried away for a moment by your intense enthusiasm — enthusiasm is a holy sentiment, sometimes a virtue; but virtues, when exaggerated, become almost vices; the most honorable sentiments, when carried too far, are reprehensible."

"Excuse me, father," said Gorenflot, "but though you may understand, I don't, at least, fully. Of what sally are you speaking?"

"Of the one you made last night?"

"Outside the convent?" timidly inquired the monk.

"No; in the convent."

"I made a sally in the convent, did I? You are sure it was I."

"Of course it was you."

Gorenflot scratched his nose. He was beginning to understand that he and the prior were playing at cross-purposes.

"I am as good a Catholic as you, but your audacity terrified me."

"My audacity," said Gorenflot; "then I have been audacious?"

"Worse than audacious, my son; you have been rash."

"Alas! father, you must pardon the errors of a nature that is not yet sufficiently disciplined; I will try to amend."

"Yes, but meanwhile I cannot help having my fears about you and about the consequences of this outbreak."

"What!" exclaimed Gorenflot, "the thing is known outside?"

"Of course; were you not aware that your sermon was heard by more than a hundred laymen?"

"My sermon?" murmured Gorenflot, more and more astonished.

"I confess that it was fine, and that it was natural for you to have been intoxicated by the unanimous applause you received. But to go so far as to propose a procession in the streets of Paris, to offer to lead it, harness on back, helm on head and partisan on shoulder, and to summon all good Catholics to join you, — that, you must admit, was going rather far."

Gorenflot stared at the prior with eyes in which might be read every note in the gamut of wonder.

"Now," continued the prior, "there is one way of arranging everything. The religious fervor that seethes in your generous heart would do you harm in Paris, where there are so many ungodly eyes to keep a watch on you. I desire that you should expend it"—

"Where, father?" asked Gorenflot, convinced that he was going to be sent at once to the dungeon.

"In the province."

"In exile!" cried Gorenflot.

"My dear brother, something much worse may happen to you if you stay here."

"Why, what can happen to me?"

"A trial which would probably end in your perpetual imprisonment, if not in your execution."

Gorenflot turned frightfully pale. He could not see why he should suffer perpetual imprisonment and even death for getting tipsy in an inn and spending a night outside his convent.

"While, my dear brother, by submitting to temporary banishment, you not only escape danger, but you plant the flag of our faith in the province. What you have done and said last night exposes you to peril, for we are immediately under the eyes of the King and his accursed minions; but in the province you can do and say the same things with comparative safety. Start, therefore, as soon as you can, Brother Gorenflot. It may be even already too late, and the archers may have received orders to arrest you."

"Mercy on us, reverend father, what is this you are saying?" stammered the monk, shaking all over with terror, for, as the prior, whose mildness at first had delighted him, went on, he was astounded at the proportions his sin, at the worst a very venial one, assumed; "archers, you say? And what have I to do with archers?"

"You may have nothing to do with them, but they may have got something to do with you."

"But in that case some one must have informed against me."

"I am quite sure of it. Start, then; start immediately."

"Start, reverend father!" said Gorenflot, completely disheartened. "That is very easy to say; but how am I to live when I have started?"

"Oh, nothing easier. You have supported others by collecting alms until now; from this out, you will support yourself by doing the same. And then, there is no reason why you should be anxious. The principles you developed in your sermon will gain you so many followers in the province that I am quite sure you can never want for anything. Go, go, in God's name, and, above all, do not return until you are sent for."

And the prior, after tenderly embracing Brother Gorenflot, pushed him with gentleness, but with a firmness there was no resisting, to the door of the cell.

There the entire community was assembled, awaiting the exit of Brother Gorenflot.

As soon as he appeared, every one made a rush at him, and tried to touch his hands, his neck, his robe. The veneration of some went even so far that they kissed the hem of his garment.

"Adieu," said one monk, pressing him to his heart, "adieu; you are a holy man; do not forget me in your prayers."

"Bah!" said Gorenflot to himself, "I a holy man. That's good!"

"Adieu," said another, wringing his hand, "brave champion of the faith, adieu! Godefroi de Bouillon was of little account in comparison with you."

"Adieu, martyr!" said a third, kissing the end of his cord; "blindness prevails among us at present, but the light will come soon."

And, in this fashion, was Gorenflot carried from arm to arm and from kisses to kisses until he came to the gate of the street, which closed behind him as soon as he passed through it.

Gorenflot looked back at that gate with an expression it would be vain to attempt to describe, and, for some distance, walked backwards, his eyes turned on it as if he saw there the exterminating angel with the flaming sword banishing him from its precincts.

The only words that escaped him outside the gate were these:

"Devil take me if they are not all mad; or, if they are not, then, God of mercy! it is I who am!"

PART II.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW BROTHER GORENFLOT FOUND OUT HE WAS A SOMNAMBULIST, AND HIS BITTER GRIEF THEREAT.

Before the day, the woful day we have now reached, when our poor monk became the victim of such unheard-of persecution, Brother Gorenflot had led a contemplative life, which is the same as saying that he went forth on his expeditions early, if he felt like breathing the fresh air; late, if he thought he should enjoy basking in the sun. As he had an abiding faith in God and the abbey kitchen, the rather mundane extras procured by him — only on very rare occasions, however — at the *Corne d'Abondance* were his solitary outside luxuries. Moreover, these extras depended pretty much on the caprices of the faithful, and the money paid for them had to be deducted from the alms collected by Brother Gorenflot at his stopping-place in the Rue Saint-Jacques. These alms reached the convent safely enough, though somewhat diminished by the amount left here and there by the good monk on the way. Of course, Chicot was a great resource, a friend who was equally fond of good feasts and of good fellows. But Chicot was very eccentric in his mode of life. Gorenflot would sometimes meet him three or four days in succession; and then, a fortnight, a month, six weeks would elapse without any sign of him; it might be that he was shut up with the King, or was attending him on some pilgrimage, or off on some expedition in furtherance of his own affairs or hobbies. Gorenflot, then, was one of those monks for whom, as for certain soldiers born in the regiment, the world begins with the superior of the house, that is to say, with the colonel of the convent, and ends when the trencher is cleared. Consequently, this soldier of the church, this child of the uniform, — if we may be permitted to apply

to him the picturesque expression which we used a short time ago in connection with the defenders of the country, — had never taken it into his head that, some time or other, he would have to plod laboriously through the country in search of adventures.

Still, if he even had some money — but the prior's answer to his demand had been plain ; without any apostolic embellishment whatever, like that versicle from Saint Luke :

"Seek and thou shalt find."

Gorenflot, at the very thought that he should have to go so far to seek, felt tired already.

However, the principal thing was to get clear of the peril that threatened him, an unknown peril indeed, but, if the prior were to be believed, not the less imminent on that account. The poor monk was not one of those who could disguise their appearance and escape by some clever metamorphosis. He resolved, therefore, in the first place, to gain the open country. Having come to this decision, he made his way, and at a rather rapid pace, through the Porte Bordelle, and passed cautiously, making himself as small as possible, the station of the night-patrol and the guardhouse of the Swiss, afraid that those archers, about whom the abbot of Sainte Geneviève had been so entertaining, might turn out to be realities of a peculiarly grasping kind.

But once in the open air, once in the level country, when he had gone five hundred steps from the city gate, when he saw the early spring grass growing on the slope of the fosse, having pierced the already verdant turf, as if to offer a seat to the tired wayfarer, when he saw the joyous sun near the horizon, the solitude on his right and left, and the bustling city behind him, he sat down on the ditch by the roadside, rested his double chin on his big fat hand, scratched the end of his stumpy nose with the index finger, and fell into a revery attended by an accompaniment of groans.

Except that he lacked a harp, Brother Gorenflot was no bad sample of one of those Hebrews who, hanging their harps on the willow, supplied, at the time of Jerusalem's desolation, the famous versicle "*Super flumina Babylonis*," and the subject of numberless melancholy pictures.

Brother Gorenflot's groans were the deeper because it was now near nine, the hour when the convent dined, for the monks, being, like all persons detached from the world, nat-

urally backward in civilization, still followed, in the year of grace 1578, the custom of the good King Charles V., who used to dine at eight in the morning, after his mass.

As easy would it be to count the grains of sand raised by a tempest on the seashore as to enumerate the contradictory ideas that seethed in the brain of the famished Gorenflot.

His first idea, the one, we may as well say, he had most trouble in getting rid of, was to return to Paris, go straight to the convent, and tell the abbot he most decidedly preferred a dungeon to exile, that he would consent to submit to the discipline, the whip, the knotted whip, yea, even the *impace*, provided only his superiors pledged their honor to see to his meals, which, with his consent, might be reduced to five a day.

To this idea, an idea so tenacious that it racked the poor monk's brain for a full quarter of an hour, succeeded another a little more rational: it was to make the best of his way to the *Corne d'Abondance*, send for Chicot, if he did not find him still asleep there, explain his deplorable situation, which was entirely due to his weakness in yielding to the jester's bacchanalian temptations, and persuade his generous friend to make some alimentary provision for him.

This idea ran in his head for a whole quarter of an hour also, for he was of a judicious turn of mind, and the notion was, really, not without merit.

And, finally, came to him another idea which was not lacking in audacity: it was to take a turn round the walls of Paris, slip in through the Porte de Saint-Germain or the Tour de Nesle, and go on with his work of collecting in the city clandestinely. He knew all the good stands, the fertile corners, the little streets where certain gossipy housewives, noted for the rearing of succulent fowl, had always a dead capon for the brother collector's wallet; he saw in memory's faithful mirror a house approached by a flight of steps, where in summer were made all kinds of preserves, and this for the main purpose — at least, so Brother Gorenflot loved to fancy — of throwing into the brother collector's bag, in exchange for his paternal benediction, — at one time, a quantity of quince jelly; at another, a dozen of pickled walnuts; at another, a box of dried apples, whose mere odor would make a dead man's mouth water for something to drink. For, to be candid, Brother Gorenflot's idea mainly turned on the pleasures of the table

and the delectability of perfect repose, so that he sometimes thought, not without alarm, of those two devil's attorneys who, on the day of the last judgment, would be likely to plead against him, and whose names are Sloth and Gluttony. But, in the meantime, the worthy monk, we are bound to admit, followed, not without remorse, perhaps, the flowery path that leads to the abyss at whose bottom howl unceasingly, like Scylla and Charybdis, those two mortal sins.

Consequently, this last plan was especially attractive to him; that was the kind of life, he thought, to which he was naturally adapted. But to carry out that plan and follow that mode of life he should have to stay in Paris, and, at every step, risk encountering the archers and sergeants and the ecclesiastical authorities, the latter a sort of folk not to be trifled with by a vagabond monk.

And then, there was another difficulty: the treasurer of the convent of Sainte Geneviève was too careful an administrator to leave Paris without a brother collector; Gorenflot would run the risk, therefore, of being confronted by a colleague who would have over him the incontestable advantage of being in the lawful exercise of his functions.

The very idea made Gorenflot shudder, and, certainly, with good reason.

The monk had got this far in his monologues and his misgivings, when he caught a glimpse of a horseman galloping so fast under the Porte Bordelle that the hoof-beats of his steed made the vault shake.

This man alighted near a house at about a hundred paces from where Gorenflot was sitting; he knocked, the gate flew open, and horse and horseman vanished.

Gorenflot took particular note of the incident, because he envied the good fortune of this cavalier who had a horse and could, consequently, sell it.

But in a moment the cavalier — Gorenflot recognized him by his cloak — came out of the house, and, seeing a clump of trees at some distance and a big heap of stones in front of the clump, he went and crouched between the trees and this novel sort of bastion.

"He 's lying in wait for some one, as sure as fate," murmured Gorenflot. "If I were not afraid of the archers I would go and warn them, or if I were a little braver I 'd make a stand against him myself."

At this moment the man in ambush, whose eyes were fixed on the city gate, except now and then when he examined the neighborhood with evident anxiety, during one of the rapid looks he threw to his right and left at intervals perceived Gorenflot, still sitting with his chin in his hand. The sight embarrassed him. He began walking with an affected air of indifference behind the pile of stone.

"Why," said Gorenflot, "I think I should know that figure — those features — but no, it is impossible."

Scarcely had the monk finished this observation when the man, who had his back turned on him, suddenly sank down, as if the muscles of his legs had given way under him. He had just heard the echo of horses' hoofs coming through the city gate.

And, in fact, three men, two of whom seemed lackeys, with three good mules and three big portmanteaus, were advancing slowly through the Porte Bordelle. The man behind the stones, as soon as he perceived them, grew even smaller than before, if that were possible, and, creeping rather than walking, he gained the group of trees. He crouched down behind the thickest of them in the attitude of a hunter on the watch.

The cavalcade passed without seeing him, or, at any rate, without noticing him, while he exaimed them with the greatest attention.

"I have hindered the commission of a crime," said Gorenflot to himself; "and my presence on this road at this hour is clearly a manifestation of the divine will; but I hope there will be another manifestation that will show me how to get my breakfast."

The cavalcade passed, and the watcher reëntered the house.

"Good!" said Gorenflot, "this incident will surely, or I am much mistaken, bring me the godsend I have been on the look-out for. A man who watches does n't care to be seen. I have got hold of a secret, and, though it were worth only six deniers, no matter, I 'll turn it to account."

And Gorenflot took his way at once to the house, but, before he reached it, he called to mind the martial appearance of the cavalier, the long rapier that flapped against his legs, and the terrible eyes that had stared at the passing cavalcade; then he said to himself:

"After all, I think I have made a mistake; a man like that is n't easily scared."

At the door Gorenflot had no longer a doubt, and it was not his nose he scratched now, but his ear.

Suddenly his face brightened up.

"An idea!" he exclaimed.

The awakening of an idea in the monk's torpid brain was so complicated an affair that he himself was astonished at its advent; but, even in that age, people were acquainted with the proverb: "Necessity is the mother of invention."

"An idea," he repeated, "ay, and an ingenious idea, too. I will say to him: 'Monsieur, every man has his own plans, desires, and hopes. I will pray for the success of your plans; give me something.' If his plans are evil, and I have no doubt they are, he will have double need of my prayers, and will, therefore, grant me an alms. And, as far as I am concerned, all I have to do is to submit the case to the first doctor I happen to meet afterward. I will ask him is it right to pray for the success of plans that are unknown to you, but which you suspect to be evil. Whatever the docter tells me to do, I will do; consequently, he, not I, will be responsible. If I should not meet a doctor, which is quite probable, I 'll abstain from praying. In the meantime, I shall have breakfasted on the alms of that evil-minded individual."

In pursuance of this resolution, Gorenflot stood close to the wall and waited.

Five minutes later, the gate opened, and man and horse appeared, the one on top of the other.

Gorenflot approached.

"Monsieur," said he, "if five *Paters* and five *Aves* for the success of your plans would be pleasing to you" —

The man turned round and faced the monk.

"Gorenflot!" he exclaimed.

"Monsieur Chicot!" cried Gorenflot, open-mouthed.

"And where the devil may you be going, comrade?" asked Chicot.

"Have n't an idea. And you?"

"Oh, it 's different with me," said Chicot; "I have an idea I am going straight before me."

"Far?"

"Until I stop. But, say, comrade, since you don't know why you are here, I suspect something."

"What?"

"That you are spying on me."

"Jesus! I spying! the Lord forbid. I saw you. that's all."

"Saw what?"

"Saw you watching the passing of the mules."

"You are mad."

"But you were behind those stones, and you had your eyes open, too!"

"See here, Gorenflot, I wish to build a house outside the walls; this freestone is mine, and I wanted to be sure it was of good quality."

"Oh, that's a different thing," said the monk, who did not believe a word of Chicot's reply; "I was mistaken."

"But what are you doing yourself outside the barriers?"

"Alas! M. Chicot, I am exiled," answered Gorenflot, with an enormous sigh.

"What?" asked Chicot.

"Exiled, I tell you."

And Gorenflot, draping himself in his robe, raised his short figure to its full height and tossed his head to and fro with the imperious air of a man who, having met with a terrible catastrophe, has, therefore, a rightful claim to the sympathy of his fellows.

"My brethren," he continued, "have cast me out from their bosom; I am excommunicated, anathematized!"

"Nonsense! for what?"

"Listen, M. Chicot," said the monk, laying his hand on his heart; "you may n't believe me, but Gorenflot pledges you his solemn word he does n't know."

"Perhaps you were found prowling about last night where you ought n't, eh, comrade?"

"To joke in that way is revolting," said Gorenflot; "you know perfectly well what I did last night."

"Yes," returned Chicot, "from eight to ten, but not from ten to three."

"What do you mean by from 'ten to three'?"

"I mean you went out at ten."

"I!" exclaimed Gorenflot, staring at the Gascon with eyes that seemed bursting out of his head.

"Undoubtedly, you; and I asked you where you were going."

"Where I was going; you asked me that?"

"Yes."

"And what did I answer?"

"That you were going to preach a sermon."

"There is some truth, however, in all this," murmured Gorenflot, staggered.

"*Parbleu!* I should say there was! Yes, and you repeated a part of your sermon; it was very long."

"It was in three parts; a division recommended by Aristotle."

"And were n't there terrible things against King Henri III. in that same discourse of yours?"

"Oh, nonsense!"

"So terrible that I should not wonder if you were prosecuted for sedition."

"M. Chicot, you open my eyes. Did I seem quite awake when I was speaking to you?"

"I must say, comrade, you looked very queer; there was a fixed gaze in your eyes which frightened me. It seemed as if you were awake and yet not awake, and as if you were talking in your sleep."

"And yet I feel sure I awoke this morning in the *Corne d'Abondance*, though the very devil were to say the contrary."

"Well! what is there astonishing about that?"

"What! nothing astonishing about that and you after telling me I left the *Corne d'Abondance* at ten?"

"Yes, but you returned at three in the morning; and, to prove it, I will even tell you you left the door open, and I was nearly freezing."

"And so was I, too; I remember that."

"So you see, then!" answered Chicot.

"If what you tell me is true" —

"If what I tell you is true? Of course it is true; you go ask Maître Bonhomet."

"Maître Bonhomet?"

"Yes. It was he opened the door for you. I remember also you were so puffed up with pride on your return that I said to you: 'Fie, fie, comrade! pride does not become any man, especially if that man is a monk.'"

"And what was I proud of?"

"Of the success of your sermon and the compliments paid you by the Duc de Guise, the cardinal, and M. de Mayenne, — whom God preserve!" added the Gascon, raising his hat.

"Now all is clear to me," said Gorenflot.

"That 's fortunate ; you agree, then, you were at that meeting ? — what the mischief do you call it ? Oh, I remember, the holy Union ; yes, that is it."

Brother Gorenflot's head dropped on his breast, and he groaned.

"I am a somnambulist," said he ; "I have long suspected it."

"Somnambulist !" repeated Chicot ; "what do you mean by that ?"

"That means, M. Chicot," said the monk, "that, in my case, mind dominates matter to such a degree that, when the body sleeps, the spirit is awake, and, when the spirit gives its orders to the body, the body has to obey, though it be ever so fast asleep."

"Heyday !" exclaimed Chicot ; "why, comrade, all this smacks of sorcery ; if you are possessed, say so, frankly. A man who walks in his sleep, gesticulates in his sleep, preaches sermons in which he attacks the King, and all this in his sleep ! — *ventre de biche !* 't is not natural. Avaunt, Beelzebub ; *vade retro, Satanas !*"

And he made his horse swerve, as if he wanted to get away from the brother.

"And so you, too, M. Chicot, forsake me. *Tu quoque, Brute.* Ah ! I should never have believed that of you," said Gorenflot, in desperation.

And the sigh the monk heaved was heart-breaking.

Chicot had compassion on this awful desperation, which was only the more terrible because it centred on one single point.

"Well, well," said he ; "what 's this you have been saying ?"

"When ?"

"Just now."

"Alas ! I don't know, M. Chicot ; I am nearly crazy. What with an over-full head and an empty stomach — oh ! M. Chicot, can't you do something for me ?"

"You spoke of travelling ?"

"Yes, the reverend prior has invited me to travel."

"In what direction ?"

"In whatever direction I choose," answered the monk.

"And you are going ?"

"I don't know where." Gorenflot raised both his hands appealingly to heaven. "Ah! for God's sake!" said he, "lend me two crowns, M. Chicot, to help me on my journey."

"I will do better than that," answered Chicot.

"Ah! what will you do?"

"I am travelling, too, as I told you."

"Yes, you told me."

"Well, supposing I take you with me?"

Gorenflot looked at the Gascon distrustfully, and like a man who could not believe in such good luck.

"But on one condition: you may be as ungodly as you like, but you must be very discreet. Are you willing to accept my proposal?"

"Accept? Well, I should think so! But have we money enough to travel with?"

"Look!" said Chicot, drawing out a long purse, gracefully rounded beneath the neck.

Gorenflot jumped for joy.

"How much?" he asked.

"A hundred and fifty pistoles."

"And where are we going?"

"You shall see, comrade."

"When shall we breakfast?"

"At once."

"But what shall I ride?" asked Gorenflot, uneasily.

"Not my horse; *corbœuf!* you would kill it."

"Then what am I to do?" said Gorenflot, disappointed.

"The simplest thing in the world; you have a belly like Silenus and you have the same hankering after wine. Well, then, to complete the resemblance, I'll buy you an ass."

"You are my king, M. Chicot; you are the sun of my existence. See that the ass you purchase is robust — you are my god, M. Chicot. And now, where are we to breakfast?"

"There, *morbleu!* Look above the door and read, if you know how to read."

They were, in fact, in front of a sort of inn, and Gorenflot, following the direction of Chicot's finger, read:

"Ham, eggs, eel-pies, and white wine."

It would be difficult to describe the change that took place in Gorenflot's countenance at this sight: his face expanded,

his eyes were dilated, his mouth opened wide and disclosed a double row of white and hungry teeth. At length he raised his arms to heaven in token of his joyful gratitude, and, rocking his enormous body backward and forward, he sang the following song, for which the only excuse that could be given was the ecstasy in which he was plunged :

"The ass, escaped from bridle rein,
At once with joy pricks up his ears;
The wine, uncorked, with joy is fain
To pour the ruby stream that cheers.
But neither ass nor wine 's so gay
As monk escaped from convent sway,
Who, seated in a vine-clad bower,
May safe defy the abbot's power."

"Capital!" cried Chicot; "and now, dear brother, don't lose time, but get to your breakfast at once, while I go in search of an ass for you."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOW BROTHER GORENFLOT TRAVELLED ON AN ASS NAMED PANURGE AND, WHILE TRAVELLING, LEARNED MANY THINGS HE DID NOT KNOW.

WHAT rendered Chicot so careless of the needs of his own stomach, for which, fool though he was or pretended to be, he had quite as much regard as any monk in the world, was the fact that he had had a liberal breakfast at the *Corne d'Abondance* before leaving it.

And besides, great passions, as some one has said, are meat and drink to a man; now, Chicot, at this very moment, was under the influence of a great passion.

Having seen Brother Gorenflot seated at a table in the little inn, and that he was beginning to despatch the ham and eggs, rapidly placed before him, with his usual celerity, Chicot went among the people of the neighborhood in search of an ass for his companion. He found among the peasants of Sceaux, between an ox and a horse, the peaceful animal that was the object of Gorenflot's aspirations: it was about four years old, rather brown in color, and had a plump body, supported by four spindle-shanks. In that age, such an ass cost twenty

livres ; Chicot gave twenty-two and was blessed for his magnificent generosity.

Chicot returned with his booty, which he led into the room where the monk was eating. Gorenflot, who had managed to make away with the half of an eel-pie and his third bottle, Gorenflot, who was excited to the highest pitch of enthusiasm by the appearance of his steed, and, moreover, disposed by the fumes of a generous wine to indulge in all generous emotions, Gorenflot jumped on his ass's neck, and, after kissing both jaws, introduced between them a long crust of bread, whereat the said ass brayed with delight.

"Oh, oh!" cried Gorenflot, "there's an animal with a fine voice! we'll sing together, now and then. Thanks, friend Chicot, thanks."

And he baptized his ass on the spot by the name of Panurge.

Chicot, after casting his eye over the table, saw from its appearance there would be no tyranny in calling a halt on his companion's performance.

He said, then, in those tones which Gorenflot could never resist:

"Come, comrade, we must be off. We'll lunch at Melun."

Although Chicot spoke in his most imperative manner, the promise he had coupled with his stern order was so pleasing that Gorenflot, instead of raising any objection, simply repeated:

"At Melun! at Melun!"

And, without further delay, Gorenflot, aided by a chair, got up on the ass, whose saddle was merely a leather cushion from which hung two straps with loops at the end that did duty for stirrups. The monk inserted his sandals in these loops, seized the halter of the donkey with his right hand, planted his left firmly on the croup, and passed out of the hotel, as majestic as the god to whom Chicot, with some reason, had compared him.

As for Chicot, he bestrode his horse with the air of the consummate equestrian, and our two cavaliers trotted along on the road to Melun.

They did not stop for four leagues. Then a halt was called, of which the monk took advantage, stretched himself on the grass, and fell asleep. Chicot made a calculation: one hundred and twenty leagues, at ten leagues a day, would take twelve days.

Panurge patiently browsed a tuft of thistles.

Ten leagues was all that could be reasonably expected from the forces of a monk and an ass.

Chicot shook his head.

"It is not possible," he murmured, looking down on Gorenflot, who was sleeping on the slope of a ditch as calmly as if he were resting on the softest eider-down coverlet; "it is not possible; if this monk care to follow me, he must make at least fifteen leagues a day."

Another torture for Brother Gorenflot, who had already witnessed so many!

Chicot pushed the monk to awake him, and then communicated the result of his meditations.

Gorenflot opened his eyes.

"Are we at Melun?" he inquired, "I am hungry."

"No, comrade, not yet," said Chicot; "and that's just why I roused you. We are going too slowly, *ventre de biche!* we are going too slowly."

"Eh? going too slowly?—and why should that vex you, dear Monsieur Chicot? Our life is but an uphill journey, though it ends in heaven; and all uphill journeys are tiresome. And what is the hurry? The more time we spend on the road, the longer we 'll be together. Am I not travelling for the propagation of the faith, and you for your pleasure? Now it 's clear the slower we go, the faster will the faith be propagated; and it 's just as clear the slower we go, the better will you amuse yourself. For both these reasons, my advice would be to stop a few days at Melun; I have been told the eel-pies there are excellent, and I should like to make a conscientious and judicious comparison between the eel-pies of Melun and those of other places. What have you to say to that, M. Chicot?"

"What I have to say is that we ought not to stop at Melun for lunch at all, but push forward as fast as we can and make up for lost time by not eating until we can sup at Montereau."

Gorenflot stared at his companion vacantly.

"Come, let us get on!" said Chicot.

The monk, who had been lying his full length, with his arms crossed under his head, simply sat up and groaned.

"Oh, if you wish to remain behind, comrade," continued Chicot, "you are your own master and can travel in your own way."

"No, no," said Gorenflot, appalled at the isolation from

which he had escaped only by a miracle; "no, no, I'll follow you, M. Chicot, I love you too much to leave you."

"Then mount and let us be off, comrade."

Gorenflot planted his ass against a little mound and succeeded in getting on, not astride, as before, but sideways, after the manner of ladies; he did so, he claimed, because this position rendered conversation easier. But the monk's real reason was that he foresaw a rapid acceleration to the movement of his steed and that his new situation would give him a double fulcrum: he could hold on by both mane and tail.

Chicot set his horse to a gallop; the ass followed, braying.

Gorenflot's first moments were something terrible, fortunately, the surface of the part on which he rested was so extended that he had less difficulty than another might have in maintaining his centre of gravity.

From time to time, Chicot stood up in his stirrups, examined the road intently, and, not seeing what he looked for on the horizon, redoubled his pace.

Gorenflot had too much to do at first to keep his seat to give any attention to these signs of vigilance and impatience. But when he had gradually acquired some confidence in his ability to maintain his equilibrium and noticed that Chicot was ever and anon going through the same performance:

"Why, dear Monsieur Chicot, what in the world are you looking for?" said he.

"Nothing," answered Chicot, "I'm only looking in the direction we're going."

"But we're going to Melun, are we not? you said so yourself; you even added that" —

"We are not going, comrade, we're not getting on," said the jester, spurring his horse.

"Not getting on! we not getting on!" cried the monk; "why, we're trotting as hard as we can."

"Then, let us gallop!" said Chicot, urging his horse to that gait. Panurge, following the example, also began to gallop, but with an ill-disguised rage that boded no good to his rider.

Gorenflot was now almost suffocated.

"I say, I say, M. Chicot," he managed to shout as soon as he was able to speak, "you may call this a pleasure excursion, but I don't see where the pleasure of it is, I assure you."

"Gallop! Gallop!" answered Chicot.

"But the ascent is awfully hard."

"A good horseman gallops best when going uphill."

"Yes, but I never pretended to be a good horseman."

"Then stay behind."

"No, no, *ventrebleu!* not for all the world!"

"Then gallop, as I told you."

And Chicot flew on at a more rattling pace than ever.

"Stay! Panurge is at his last gasp!" cried Gorenflot. "Panurge is at a standstill!"

"Then good-bye, comrade," answered Chicot.

Gorenflot had a moment's temptation to reply in corresponding fashion; but he recalled the fact that yonder horse, which he cursed from the bottom of his heart and which carried a man so crotchety, carried also the purse that was in the pocket of that man. He became resigned, and beating the donkey's side with his sandals, he forced him anew to a gallop.

"I shall kill my poor Panurge!" he cried, piteously, in hopes that though Chicot's sensibility was callous to assaults, his self-interest might prove more malleable.

"Well! kill him, comrade, kill him," Chicot answered back, unmoved by a remark that Gorenflot judged so important, and not lessening his speed in the slightest; "kill him, we'll buy a mule."

As if these threatening words had come home to him, the ass left the middle of the road and dashed into a little dry side-path on which Gorenflot himself would not have ventured to go even on foot.

"Help! help!" cried the monk, "I shall tumble off into the river."

"No danger," answered Chicot; "if you tumble into the river I'll warrant you're sure to float without any aid."

"Oh!" mumbled Gorenflot, "this will be the death of me, for sure! And to think all this has happened to me only because I am a somnambulist!"

And the monk raised an appealing look to heaven, meaning thereby:

"Lord! Lord! what crime hath thy servant committed that thou shouldst afflict him with such an infirmity?"

Suddenly Chicot, who had reached the top of the ascent, halted his horse so abruptly that the hind legs of the astonished brute bent until his crupper almost touched the ground.

Gorenflot, who was not so good a horseman as his companion, and who, besides, had to do with a halter for a bridle, Gorenflot, we repeat, continued his course.

"Stop, *corbœuf!* stop!" cried Chicot.

But the ass had got an idea into his head that he might just as well have a gallop, and asses' ideas are tenacious things.

"Stop!" cried Chicot again, "or, as sure as I am a gentleman, I 'll send a bullet through your skull!"

"What a devil of a fellow!" said Gorenflot to himself. "I wonder what mad dog bit him!"

Then, Chicot's voice growing more and more menacing, and the monk believing he already heard the whistling of the bullet wherewith he was threatened, the latter executed a manœuvre which his manner of riding enabled him to go through with the greatest ease: he slipped down to the ground.

"Could n't be done better!" said he, as he bravely dropped on his centre of gravity, still holding fast with both hands to the halter of his ass, which resisted for a few steps, but ended by giving in.

Then Gorenflot looked round for Chicot, eager to detect on his countenance those marks of approbation that must surely be there at sight of a manœuvre so skilfully executed.

But Chicot was concealed behind a rock, from whence he shot forth his signals and his threats.

Such excess of wariness convinced the monk that something of moment was at hand. He looked before him and there perceived, about five hundred paces from him, three men quietly jogging along on their mules.

At the first glance he recognized the travellers who had ridden in the morning from Paris through the Porte Bordelle, the same travellers that Chicot had watched so eagerly from behind his tree.

Chicot remained in the same posture until the three travellers were out of sight. Then and then only did he rejoin his comrade, who was still seated on the spot where he had fallen and was still holding the halter of Panurge with both his hands.

"Hang it, M. Chicot," cried Gorenflot, who was beginning to be out of patience, "you must explain to me what business is this we 're engaged in; a moment ago it was, Devil take the hindmost! and now it 's, Don't budge an inch from where you are!"

"My good friend," said Chicot, "I only wanted to find out whether or not your donkey was a thoroughbred, or if I had not been swindled in paying twenty-two livres for it. Now that the experiment is made, I am more than satisfied."

The monk, as, of course, is understood, was not duped by any such answer, and was about to make the fact clear to his companion, but his natural laziness warned him not to get into an argument, and was, as usual, victorious.

He contented himself, then, with answering, ill-humoredly enough:

"Well, I suppose it does n't matter, but I am very tired, and very hungry also."

"Oh, don't let that trouble you," replied Chicot, with a jolly thump on the monk's shoulder; "I am as tired and hungry as you are, and at the first hostelry we meet" —

"And then?" asked Gorenflot, a little inclined to doubt the Gascon's words after his late experience.

"And then!" said Chicot, "we 'll have a pair of fricasseed chickens with broiled ham and a jug of their best wine."

"The honest truth, now?" inquired Gorenflot; "you 're in real earnest, this time?"

"In good and sober earnest, comrade."

"Then," said the monk, rising, "let us make for this blessed hostelry as fast as we can. Come, Panurge, you 'll have your bran."

The ass's answer was a joyous bray.

Chicot got on horseback; Gorenflot led his ass by the halter.

The longed-for inn speedily heaved in sight of the travellers, just between Corbeil and Melun; but, to the great surprise of Gorenflot, who admired from afar its alluring aspect, Chicot ordered the monk to mount his ass, and faced about to the left so as to get to the rear of the house. For that matter, a single glance was enough to bring home to Gorenflot, whose wits were brightening up wonderfully, the reason of this strange behavior: the travellers' three mules, whose tracks Chicot was observing so intently, had stopped before the door.

"And so the events of our journey and the hours for our meals are all to be regulated by these infernal travellers?" thought Gorenflot. "It 's heartbreaking."

And he heaved a profound sigh.

Panurge, on his side, saw they were swerving from the direct line which all the world, including even asses, knows is

the shortest, so came to a standstill and planted himself as stiffly on his four feet as if he had determined to take root in the ground where he happened to be.

"Look!" said Gorenflot, piteously, "even my ass refuses to advance."

"Ah, he refuses to advance," answered Chicot; "wait and we 'll see!"

He approached a cornel-hedge and selected a rod five feet long and an inch thick; it was at once solid and flexible.

Panurge was not one of those stupid animals that pay no attention to what is passing around them, and only foresee certain events when such events are rapping them on the pate; he had watched the manœuvre of Chicot, for whom he was doubtless beginning to feel all the respect that eminent man deserved, and, as soon as he was sure of the jester's intentions, he shook himself and put his best leg foremost.

"He 's going!" cried the monk to Chicot.

"No matter," said the Gascon, "when you 're travelling with a monk and a donkey, a stick always comes in handy."

And Chicot finished cutting his rod.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW BROTHER GORENFLOT TRADED HIS ASS FOR A MULE, AND HIS MULE FOR A HORSE.

However, the tribulations of Gorenflot were nearing their end, for this day, at least; after their roundabout course, the pair took to the highway again and stopped at a rival inn about two miles further on. Chicot hired an apartment that overlooked the road, and ordered supper to be served in his chamber; but it was easily seen that supper held but second place in the thoughts of Chicot. He gave only scanty employment to his teeth while he looked with all his eyes and listened with all his ears. He remained thus in a brown study until ten; but as he had neither seen nor heard anything, he raised the siege at ten, and directed his own horse and the monk's ass to be ready at daybreak, after they had recuperated on double rations of oats and bran.

At this order, Gorenflot, who for an hour had been appar-

ently sleeping but really only dozing, plunged in that delectable ecstasy which follows a good repast watered by a sufficient quantity of generous wine, heaved a sigh.

"At daybreak?" said he.

"Well? *ventre de biche!* man," retorted Chicot, "you ought to have got accustomed by this time to rising at that hour!"

"And pray why?" inquired Gorenflot.

"For matins."

"I had an exemption from my superior," answered the monk.

Chicot shrugged his shoulders, and the word "sluggard" died away on his lips.

"Well, yes, sluggard, if you like; why not?" said Gorenflot.

"Man was born for work," answered Chicot, sententiously.

"And the monk for repose; the monk is an exception."

And, satisfied with this reply, which seemed to touch even Chicot himself, the monk made an exit that was full of dignity, and gained his bed, which Chicot, doubtless fearing some imprudence, had ordered to be placed in his own room.

On the morning, at daybreak, if Brother Gorenflot had not been sleeping the sleep of the just, he would have seen Chicot rise, approach the window and take his stand behind the curtain.

Soon, although the hangings concealed him, Chicot drew back rapidly; if Gorenflot, instead of continuing to slumber, had been wide awake, he would have heard the tramping of three mules on the pavement.

Chicot ran up to Gorenflot and shook him by the arm until the latter opened his eyes.

"Am I never to have any rest?" he stammered, having slept a full ten hours.

"Up! up!" said the Gascon, "dress yourself, we start at once."

"But my breakfast?" asked the monk.

"You 'll find it on the road to Montereau."

"What do you mean by — Montereau?" inquired the monk, who was not strong in geography.

"Montereau is the town where we 're to breakfast; is not that enough for you?" answered the Gascon.

"Yes," returned Gorenflot, laconically.

"Then, comrade, I 'm going down to pay the bill for ourselves

and our beasts. If you are not ready in five minutes, I 'm off without you."

A monk does not take long to make his toilet; but Gorenflot spent six minutes at it. Consequently, when he reached the door, he saw that Chicot, who was as punctual as a Swiss, had already started.

The monk, thereupon, mounted Panurge, who, excited by his double ration of oats and bran just provided for him by Chicot's orders, galloped of his own accord and quickly placed his rider by the side of the Gascon.

Chicot was standing on his stirrups; he saw the three mules and the three travellers on the horizon; they were descending a little hill.

The monk groaned at the thought that an influence utterly foreign to him should affect his fate in this fashion.

But, this time, Chicot kept his word, and they breakfasted at Montereau.

The day was much like the one before, and the next was attended by pretty much the same succession of incidents. We shall, therefore, pass rapidly over details; and, indeed, Gorenflot was growing accustomed to his checkered existence, when, towards evening, he perceived that Chicot was gradually losing all his gayety ever since noon; the latter had failed to get a glimpse of the travellers he was pursuing; so he was very ill-tempered at supper and slept badly.

Gorenflot ate and drank enough for two, sang his best songs; it was all in vain. Chicot was as dull as ever.

Hardly had the day come into existence when he was on his feet and shaking his companion; the monk dressed, and the trot with which they started soon changed to a wild gallop. But they might as well have taken it easy; no travellers in sight.

Toward noon, horse and ass were ready to drop.

Chicot went straight to the turnpike office built on the Pont Villeneuve-le-Roi for the accommodation of cloven-footed animals.

"Did you see three travellers, mounted on mules, pass this morning?" he inquired.

"This morning, monsieur," replied the turnpike keeper, "no; yesterday, no doubt I did."

"Yesterday?"

"Yes, yesterday evening, at seven."

"Did you notice them?"

"Bless my heart, monsieur! does any one ever notice travellers?"

"I only ask if you have any idea of the rank of these men."

"To my idea, they were a master and two servants."

"That's what I wanted," said Chicot; and he gave the man two crowns.

"Yesterday evening, at seven," he murmured; "*ventre de biche!* they are twelve hours ahead of me. Courage, comrade, let us push on!"

"Listen, M. Chicot," said the monk, "courage is all very well. I have a little for my own use, but none to spare for Panurge."

And, in fact, the poor animal, tired out for two whole days, was trembling in every limb, and Gorenflot was in a tremble, too, caused by the quivering of his beast's poor body.

"And look at your horse, also," continued Gorenflot; "see what a state he's in!"

It was easy enough seeing his condition; the noble animal, notwithstanding his ardor, or rather, because of his ardor, was streaming with foam, and a hot vapor issued from his nostrils, while the blood seemed ready to spurt from his eyes.

After a rapid examination of the two beasts, Chicot seemed inclined to favor his companion's opinion.

Gorenflot drew a long breath of relief.

Then Chicot said suddenly: "Can't be helped, brother collector. We must take a decisive step on the spot."

"Why, we have been doing nothing else for some days," cried Gorenflot, whose features showed his agitation, although the nature of the new proposal was utterly unknown to him.

"We must part," said Chicot, taking at once, as the phrase goes, the bull by the horns.

"Oh, nonsense," returned Gorenflot, "always the same joke. We part! and why?"

"You ride too slowly, comrade."

"*Vertudieu!*" exclaimed Gorenflot; "while I ride like the wind! We galloped five hours without stopping, this morning."

"It is n't enough."

"Then let us start again; the quicker we go, the sooner we'll arrive; for I suppose we'll arrive some time."

"My horse won't go, and your ass is n't fit for work, either."

"Then what is to be done?"

"We 'll leave them here, and pick them up when we return."

"But what about ourselves? Do you intend going the rest of the way on foot?"

"No; we 'll get mules."

"How?"

"Buy them."

"Well, well!" said Gorenflot, with a sigh, "another sacrifice."

"So then?"

"All right, bring on your mule.

"Bravo, comrade; why, you 're getting on. Commend Boyard and Panurge to the care of the innkeeper, and I leave you and go to buy the mules."

Gorenflot fulfilled conscientiously the mission wherewith he was charged; during his four days' connection with Panurge he had gained a keener appreciation of his faults than of his virtues, and had noticed that his three predominant faults were the faults to which he himself inclined: sloth, gluttony, luxury. Their kindred failings were, however, a bond of sympathy, and Gorenflot parted from his ass with regret; but Gorenflot was not only slothful, gluttonous, and luxurious, he was also selfish, and he preferred parting from Panurge to parting from Chicot, for, as we have already indicated, Chicot carried the purse.

Chicot returned with two mules, on which they made twenty leagues that day; and so, on that very evening, Chicot had the satisfaction of seeing the three mules standing before a farrier's door.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, for the first time drawing a breath of relief.

"Ah!" sighed the monk, in turn.

But the Gascon's trained eye could distinguish neither the harness of the mules nor the owner and his servants; the mules were reduced to their natural ornament, by which we mean they were completely naked; as for the master and his servants, they had vanished.

Still more; about these animals were people unknown to Chicot, who were evidently examining and appraising them: a horsedealer, the farrier, and two Franciscans; they turned the mules round and round, looked at their teeth, eyes, ears; in a word, they were testing them.

Chicot trembled in every one of his members.

"You go forward," said he to Gorenflot, "join the Franciscans, draw them aside, and question them; you monks keep, I imagine, no secrets from one another; get them to tell you who were the owners of the mules, their price, and what has become of their former masters; then return with your information."

Gorenflot, uneasy at his friend's uneasiness, trotted off and soon returned.

"I have the whole story," said he. "And first, do you know where we are?"

"Oh, *morbleu!* we're on the road to Lyons," said Chicot; "that's the only thing I care to know."

"Indeed! well, you may care to know something more; at least, I should gather from what you have been telling me that you wanted to know what has become of the mules' owners."

"Yes, go on."

"The one who seems to be a gentleman" —

"Good!"

"The one who seems to be a gentleman has taken the road by Château-Chinon and Privas, a short cut to Avignon, apparently."

"Alone?"

"Alone? how?"

"I ask you has he taken this road alone?"

"With a lackey."

"And the other lackey?"

"Continued on the road to Lyons."

"Who'd have thought it! And why is the gentleman going to Avignon? I fancied he was going to Rome. But," continued Chicot, as if speaking to himself, "I am asking you about matters of which you can know nothing."

"Really, now?" answered Gorenflot; "and suppose I do know something of them? Ah! that astonishes you, does it?"

"What do you know?"

"He is going to Avignon because our Holy Father Pope Gregory XIII. has sent a legate plenipotentiary to Avignon."

"Good," said Chicot, "I understand — and the mules?"

"The mules were tired out; they sold them to a horse-dealer, who wants to sell them again to the Franciscans."

"For how much?"

"Fifteen pistoles apiece."

"Then how were they able to continue their journey?"

"On horses which they purchased."

"From whom?"

"A captain of reiters stationed here to buy fresh horses."

"*Ventre de biche*, comrade," cried Chicot, "you 're a wonder, and I never appreciated you until to-day!"

Gorenflot strutted like a peacock.

"Now," said Chicot, "finish what you have so well begun."

"What am I to do?"

Chicot jumped off and flung the bridle on the arm of the monk.

"Take the two mules and offer them to the Franciscans for twenty pistoles; they will give you the preference, surely."

"If they don't," said Gorenflot, "I 'll denounce them to their superior."

"Bravo, comrade, you *are* getting on."

"But," inquired Gorenflot, "how are we to continuc our journey?"

"On horseback, *morbleu*, on horseback!"

"You don't say so!" cried the monk, scratching his ear.

"You afraid? a cavalier like you? nonsense!" said Chicot.

"Bah!" answered Gorenflot, "I 'll risk it! But where shall I find you again?"

"On the Place de la Ville."

"Then go there and wait for me."

And the monk advanced resolutely toward the Franciscans, while Chicot made his way to the chief square of the little town, by a cross-street.

There he found the captain of reiters at the inn known as the Coq-Hardi; he was quaffing a rather nice little wine of Auxerre, which second-class amateurs often mistake for Burgundy; the Gascon got further information from him which confirmed that which he had received from Gorenflot in every particular.

In a moment he bargained for two horses which figured on the honest reiter's report book as having *died on the route;* thanks to this accident, he had to pay only thirty-five pistoles for them.

They were discussing the price of the saddles and bridles when Chicot saw the monk coming through a little side street with two saddles on his head and two bridles in his hands.

"Oho! what does this mean, comrade?" said he.

"Why," answered Gorenflot, "these are the saddles and bridles of our mules."

"So you kept a grip on them, you rogue?" said Chicot, with his broad smile.

"Indeed I did," answered the monk.

"And you sold the mules?"

"For ten pistoles apiece."

"Which they paid?"

"Here's the money."

And Gorenflot slapped his pockets, full of all sorts of coins.

"*Ventre de biche!*" cried Chicot, "you are a great man, comrade."

"I am what I am," answered Gorenflot, with modest pride.

"And now to work," said Chicot.

"Ah! but I'm so thirsty!" said the monk.

"Well, drink while I am saddling the horses, but not too much."

"Just one bottle."

"Oh, I don't mind a bottle."

Gorenflot drank two, and returned to restore the remainder of the money to Chicot.

Chicot for a moment entertained the notion of letting the monk keep the twenty pistoles, diminished by the price of the two bottles; but he reflected that on the day Gorenflot came into possession of even two crowns he would lose all control over him.

He took the money, then, without the monk even noticing he had hesitated, and got on horseback.

The monk did the same, with the assistance of the captain of reiters, a man who feared God, and who, in exchange for his services in holding Gorenflot's foot while the latter mounted, received the monk's benediction.

"Could n't be better," said Chicot, as he set his horse to a gallop; "that blade got a blessing for which he should bless his stars."

Gorenflot, seeing his supper running before him, kept up with Chicot; moreover, his equestrian progress was rapid: instead of clutching the mane with one hand and the tail with the other, he now grasped the pommel of the saddle with both hands, and with that single support, went as fast as Chicot could well desire.

In the end he showed more activity than Chicot himself, for whenever his patron changed the gait and moderated the pace of his horse, the monk, who preferred galloping to trotting, kept up the same rattling pace, shouting hurrahs at his steed.

Such noble efforts deserved a reward: the next evening, a little this side of Chalons, Chicot came up with Maître Nicolas David, still disguised as a lackey, and did not lose sight of him until both reached Lyons, through whose gates the entire three passed on the evening of the eighth day after their departure from Paris.

This occurred at the very moment almost when Bussy, Saint-Luc, and his wife arrived, as we have already said, from an opposite direction, at the Castle of Méridor.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW CHICOT AND HIS COMPANION BECAME GUESTS AT THE CYGNE DE LA CROIX, AND HOW THEIR HOST RECEIVED THEM.

Maître Nicolas David, still disguised as a lackey, made his way to the Place des Terreaux and selected the principal hostelry in the square, which was known as the Cygne de la Croix.

Chicot saw him enter and watched until he was sure he was received in the hostelry and would not leave it.

"Have you any objection to the Cygne de la Croix?" said the Gascon to his travelling companion.

"Not the slightest," was the answer.

"You will go in, then, and bargain for a private and retired room; you will say you are expecting your brother; then you will wait for me at the door; meanwhile, I shall take a walk and return at nightfall; when I do, I expect to find you at your post, and, as you have been acting as sentry and must know the plan of the house, you will conduct me to my chamber without exposing me to the danger of meeting people I don't wish to see. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," answered Gorenflot.

"The chamber you select must be spacious, cheerful, easy

of access, and, if possible, next to that of the traveller who has just arrived. Try also to get one with windows looking on the street, so that I may see every one who enters or goes out; do not mention my name on any account, and you can promise mountains of gold to the cook."

Gorenflot fulfilled his commission to perfection. After the apartment was chosen, night came on, and, after night came on, Gorenflot took his companion by the hand and led him to the room in question. The monk, who, foolish as nature had made him, had some of the churchman's craft, called Chicot's attention to the fact that their room, although situated on another landing, was next to that occupied by Nicolas David, and was separated from it only by a partition, partly of wood and partly of lime, which could be easily bored through by any one who wished.

Chicot listened to the monk with the greatest attention, and any one who had heard the speaker and seen his hearer would have been able to see how the face of the latter brightened at the words of the former.

Then, when Gorenflot had finished:

"What you have just told me deserves a reward," said Chicot; "you shall have sherry for supper to-night, Gorenflot. Yes, *morbleu!* you shall, or I am not your comrade."

"I never got tipsy on that wine," said Gorenflot, "it ought to be pleasant."

"*Ventre de biche!*" answered Chicot, "you 'll know it in two hours, you may take my word for it."

Chicot sent for the host.

It may be thought strange, perhaps, that the teller of this story should introduce so many of his characters into so many hostelries: to this he can only reply that it is not his fault if his characters, some in obedience to the wishes of their mistresses, others to avoid the anger of the King, have to travel north or south, as the case may be. Now, placed as the author is between antiquity, when people, owing to the existence of a spirit of fraternal hospitality, could do without inns, and modern life, in which the inn has been transformed into an ordinary, he is forced to stop in hostelries, since all the important scenes in his book have to take place therein. Moreover, the caravansaries of the Occident had at this period a triple form which offers considerable interest and which almost no longer exists. This triple form was the inn, the hostelry, and

the tavern. Note that we do not speak here of those agreeable bathing-houses which have no counterpart at the present day, and which, being legacies bequeathed by the Rome of the emperors to the Paris of our kings, borrowed from antiquity the manifold pleasures of its profane license.

But these latter establishments were still enclosed within the walls of the capital; under the reign of King Henri III. the province had still only its hostelry, its inn, and its tavern.

Well, then, we are in a hostelry, a fact of which the host was proudly conscious, as was proved by his reply to Chicot's request for his presence that his guest must have patience, since he was talking with a traveller who, having arrived before him, had a right to prior service.

Chicot guessed that this traveller was his lawyer.

"What can they be talking about?" asked Chicot.

"You think, then, that our host and your friend are in collusion?"

"Zounds, man, you see it yourself! since the fellow with the malapert face which we got a glimpse of and which, I hope, no doubt belongs to" —

"Our host," said the monk.

"Is holding a conference with another fellow dressed as a lackey."

"But," said Gorenflot, "he has changed his clothes — I noticed that — he is now entirely dressed in black."

"That settles it! the host is engaged in some plot or other, there 's not a doubt of it."

"Shall I try to confess his wife?" asked Gorenflot.

"No," said Chicot, "you had better go and take a stroll through the city."

"But my supper?"

"I 'll see it is got ready during your absence. Stay, here 's a crown to enable you to get into proper trim for it."

Gorenflot accepted the crown gratefully.

During his travels, the monk had more than once taken a solitary ramble in the evening, a sort of half nocturnal promenade of which he was passionately fond; even in Paris he used to venture on a tramp of this sort, his office of brother collector giving him a certain amount of freedom. But these rambles were dearer than ever to him since he left the convent. Gorenflot's love of freedom now breathed through every pore, and he only remembered his former abode as a prison.

So, with his robe tucked up and his crown in his pocket, he set out on his explorations.

No sooner was he outside the room than Chicot took a gimlet immediately, and bored a hole through the partition, on a level with his eye.

This hole, not as large as that in a pea-shooter, did not allow him, on account of the thickness of the boards, to get a distinct view of the different parts of the room; but, by gluing his ear to it, he could hear the voices easily enough.

However, thanks to his host's position in the apartment, Chicot could see him plainly as he talked with Nicolas David.

Some words escaped him, but those he did catch proved that David was making a great display of his fidelity to the King, speaking even of a mission confided to him by M. de Morvilliers.

While he was discoursing, the host listened respectfully, but with this respect was mingled a good deal of indifference, to say the very least of it. His answers were few and short, and Chicot noticed the irony in his eyes and in his tones every time he pronounced the King's name.

"Aha!" said Chicot to himself, "would our host be a Leaguer, peradventure? *Mordieu!* I 'll make sure of that."

And as the conversation in Maître Nicolas' room did not promise anything further of importance, Chicot resolved to wait patiently for his host's visit to himself.

At last the door opened.

The host entered, hat in hand, but with the same jeering expression that had struck Chicot when he saw him talking with the lawyer.

"Be seated, my dear monsieur," said Chicot, "and before we come to any definite arrangement, be pleased to hear my story."

The host seemed anything but pleased with this exordium, and even made a sign with his head that he preferred standing.

"I wish you to feel entirely at your ease, my dear monsieur," resumed Chicot.

The host made a sign that intimated he was in the habit of taking his ease without the permission of anybody.

"You saw me this morning with a monk?" continued Chicot.

"Yes, monsieur," answered the host.

"Hush! we must be careful — this monk is proscribed."

"Pshaw!" returned the host, "I suppose some Huguenot in disguise."

Chicot assumed an air of offended dignity.

"Huguenot!" he said, disgusted, "pray who spoke of a Huguenot? I 'd have you know this monk is one of my relatives, and there are no Huguenots among my relatives. Shame! shame! an honest man like you ought to blush at the very thought of uttering the name of such vermin."

"But, monsieur, such things have occurred," retorted the other.

"Never in my family! On the contrary, that monk is the most furious enemy ever let loose on the Huguenots, and so he has fallen into disgrace with his Majesty King Henri III., who, as you know, protects them."

The host seemed at length interested in the persecution of Gorenflot.

"Hush!" said he, laying a finger on his lip.

"What do you mean?" asked Chicot; "surely you have n't any of the King's people here?"

"I am afraid I have," said the host, shaking his head; "there, on that side, is a traveller" —

"Then my relative and I must escape at once, for an outlaw, a fugitive" —

"Where could you go?"

"We have two or three addresses given us by one of our friends, an innkeeper named La Hurière."

"La Hurière! Do you know La Hurière?"

"Hush! 't is a name not to be spoken; we made his acquaintance on the evening of St. Bartholomew."

"Then," said the host, "I see that you and your relative are holy people. I am also acquainted with La Hurière. I was even desirous when I bought this hostelry of adopting the same sign as his, the Belle-Étoile, as a testimony of my friendship for him; but the hostelry had long been known as the Cygne de la Croix, and I was afraid a change might not work well. So you say that your relative, monsieur" —

"Was so imprudent as to preach against the Huguenots; he was extraordinarily successful, and so his Most Christian Majesty, furious at the success that disclosed the real opinions of the people, wanted to put him in prison."

"And then?" inquired the innkeeper, in a tone that showed there could be no mistake about his feelings.

"Faith, I carried him off," said Chicot.

"And you did right. The poor dear man!"

"M. de Guise, however, promised me that he would protect him."

"What! the great Henri de Guise? Henry the" —

"Henri the saint."

"Yes, you are right, Henri the saint."

"But I was afraid of civil war."

"Then," said the host, "if you are a friend of M. de Guise, you know this."

And the innkeeper made a sort of masonic sign by which the Leaguers knew one another.

"Faith, I should say I did! And you know this, don't you?"

Chicot, during the famous night he had passed in the convent, had not only noticed, a score of times, the sign made by the innkeeper, but the corresponding sign also.

So Chicot, in his turn, made the second sign.

"Then," said the host, all his suspicions scattered to the wind, "you must consider yourself at home, my house is yours; look on me as a friend, for I look on you as a brother, and if you have no money" —

Chicot's answer was to draw from his pocket a purse that, although already a little depleted, had still all the outward show of a dignified corpulence.

The sight of a chubby-looking purse is always pleasing, even to the generous man who offers you money and in this way learns that you have no need of it: he can keep the merit of his offer without being compelled to put it into execution.

"Oh, just as you like," said the host.

"I may as well tell you," added Chicot, "so that you may be quite easy in your mind, that we are travelling for the propagation of the faith, and that our expenses are paid by the treasurer of the holy Union. Be so kind, then, as to point out a hostelry where we may be perfectly safe."

"*Morbleu!*" said the innkeeper, "I know of no place as safe as where you are; you can take my word for that."

"But you spoke just now of a man staying in the next room to me."

"Yes, but let him take care; let him make the slightest attempt to spy on you, and out he goes, neck and crop, or Bernouillet is a liar."

"Your name is Bernouillet?" asked Chicot.

"That is my name, monsieur; not known, I suppose, in the capital, but pretty well known among the faithful in the province, I am proud to say. Give but the word, and I'll turn him adrift at once."

"Why should you?" said Chicot; "on the contrary, let him stay; it's always better to have your enemies under your hand; you can watch them, at least."

"You are right," said Bernouillet, admiringly.

"But what makes you believe this man is our enemy? I say *our* enemy," said the Gascon, with a tender smile, "because I see clearly we are brothers."

"Yes, certainly we are," returned the host. "What makes me believe" —

"That is what I am asking you."

"Well! he came disguised as a lackey, then he just put on a lawyer's dress; and I am sure he is no more a lawyer than he is a lackey, for I saw the long point of a rapier under his cloak. Besides, he spoke of the King in a way that nobody speaks of him; and he confessed to me he had a mission from M. de Morvilliers, who, you know, is a minister of Nebuchadnezzar."

"Say rather of Herod."

"Of Sardanapalus!"

"Bravo!"

"Ah! I see we understand each other," said the host.

"I should think so!" returned Chicot; "so I remain?"

"I'll be bound you do!"

"But not a word about my relative."

"You may depend on that."

"Nor about me."

"What do you take me for? But silence! Some one is coming."

Gorenflot stood on the threshold.

"Himself! — the worthy man himself!" cried the host.

And he went up to Gorenflot and made the sign of the Leaguers.

This sign struck Gorenflot with surprise and dismay.

"Answer, answer, brother," said Chicot, "our host knows everything, he is a member."

"Member!" repeated Gorenflot, "member of what?"

"Of the holy Union," said Bernouillet, in almost a whisper.

"You see now you may answer his sign; answer it, then."

Gorenflot made the answering sign, and the innkeeper's joy was complete.

"But," said Gorenflot, who was in a hurry to change the conversation, "I was promised sherry."

"Sherry, Malaga, Alicant, all the wines in my cellar are at your service, brother."

Gorenflot's eyes wandered from the innkeeper to Chicot and were then raised to heaven. He had not the slightest notion why such luck befell him, and it was evident he was acknowledging, with true Christian humility, that his good fortune surpassed his merits.

The three following days, Gorenflot got tipsy: the first day on sherry, the second on Malaga, the third on Alicant; however, after all his experiments, he confessed that there was nothing like Burgundy, and so he went back to Chambertin.

During all the time devoted by Gorenflot to these vinous verifications, Chicot never left his room, and kept on watching the lawyer Nicolas David from night till morning.

The innkeeper, who attributed Chicot's seclusion to his fear of the pretended royalist, did his best to satisfy his vindictive feelings by playing every sort of trick on the latter.

But all this had very little effect, at least apparently. Nicolas David, having made an appointment to meet Pierre de Gondy at the hostelry of the Cygne de la Croix, would not leave his temporary domicile, dreading he might miss the Guises' messengers if he went elsewhere, and so, in his host's presence, nothing seemed to ruffle him. However, when the door closed on Maître Bernouillet, his solitary rage was a diverting spectacle for Chicot, who had his eye always on the gimlet-hole.

David had divined the innkeeper's antipathy toward him on the second day of his residence, and had said, shaking his fist at him, or rather, at the door through which he passed out:

"In five or six days, you scoundrel, you shall pay me for this."

Chicot knew enough now to satisfy him; he was sure the lawyer would not leave the hostelry before he received the legate's answer.

But as this sixth day — the seventh since his arrival at the inn — drew nigh, Nicolas David, who had been told repeatedly by the innkeeper, in spite of Chicot's remonstrances, that his room was badly needed, Nicolas David, we say, fell sick.

Then the inkeeper insisted he should leave while he was

still able to walk. The lawyer asked a day's respite, declaring he would certainly be well the next day. But on the next day he was worse than ever.

The host himself came with this news to his friend the Leaguer.

"Aha!" said he, rubbing his hands, "our royalist, Herod's own friend, is going to be passed in review by the Admiral [1] — *rub-a-dub, dub, dub, rub-a-dub!*"

Now, *to be passed in review by the Admiral* meant, among the Leaguers, to make one single stride from this world to the next.

"Pshaw!" returned Chicot, "you don't believe he is dying?"

"A terrible fever, my dear brother, tertian fever, quartan fever, with paroxysms that make him bound up and down in his bed; a perfect demon, he tried to strangle me and beats my servants; the doctors can make nothing of the case."

Chicot reflected.

"You saw him, then?" he inquired.

"Of course! have n't I told you he tried to strangle me?"

"How was he?"

"Pale, nervous, shattered, shouting like one possessed."

"What did he shout?"

"Take care of the King. They want to murder the King."

"The wretch!"

"The scoundrel! sometimes he says he expects a man from Avignon and wishes to see this man before he dies."

"What 's that you say?" returned Chicot. "He speaks of Avignon, does he?"

"Every minute."

"*Ventre de biche!*" said Chicot, letting fly his favorite oath.

"But don't you think," resumed the innkeeper, "it would be rather odd should he die here?"

"Very odd, indeed," said Chicot, "but I should not wish him to die before the arrival of the man from Avignon."

"Why? the sooner he dies, the sooner we 're rid of him."

"Yes, but I do not push my hatred so far as to wish the destruction of both body and soul; and since this man is coming from Avignon to hear his confession" —

"Oh, nonsense! It 's only some feverish delusion, some fancy for which his disease is responsible; you may be sure nobody is coming."

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[1] An allusion to the death of Coligny, the chief of the Huguenots.

"But you see we can't tell," said Chicot.

"Ah! you are the right stamp of a Christian, you are!" answered the innkeeper.

"Render good for evil," says the divine law.

Chicot's host retired, filled with wonder and admiration.

As for Gorenflot, who was left totally in the dark as to all these weighty concerns, he grew visibly fatter and fatter; at the end of the week the staircase that led to his bedchamber groaned under his weight and was beginning to hem him in between the banister and the wall, so that one evening he came in terrible agitation to announce to Chicot that the staircase was narrowing. However, neither David, nor the League, nor the deplorable condition into which religion had fallen troubled him. His sole and only care was to vary his bill of fare and harmonize the different wines of Burgundy with the different dishes he ordered. No wonder the astounded innkeeper muttered every time he saw him come in and go out:

"And to think that that corpulent father should be a regular torrent of eloquence!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW THE MONK CONFESSED THE LAWYER, AND THE LAWYER CONFESSED THE MONK.

At length the day that was to rid the hostelry of its guest arrived or appeared to arrive. Maître Bernouillet dashed into Chicot's room, laughing so immoderately that the Gascon had to wait some time before learning the cause of this hilarity.

"He 's dying!" cried the charitable innkeeper, "he 'll soon be as dead as a door-nail, at last!"

"So that is why you are in such a fit of merriment?" asked Chicot.

"Not a doubt of it. Why, the trick would make a dog laugh."

"What trick?"

"Oh, now, that won't do. Confess that it was you yourself, my fine gentleman, that played it."

"I played a trick on the sick man?"

"Yes!"

"What is all this about? What has happened to him?"

"What has happened to him! You know he was always screaming for his man from Avignon!"

"Oho! so the man has come at last?"

"He has come."

"You have seen him?"

"Certainly. Do you think any one enters here whom I do not see?"

"And what did he look like?"

"The man from Avignon? oh, little, thin, and rosy."

"It's the same!" escaped from Chicot, inadvertently.

"There! now you must admit you sent the man to him, since you recognize the man."

"So the messenger has arrived!" cried Chicot, rising and twisting his mustache; "*ventre de biche!* tell me all about it, my dear Bernouillet."

"All 's easily told, and if it was n't you that did the trick, you will, perhaps, say who it was. Well, then, an hour ago, as I was hanging up a rabbit, a little man and a big horse halted before the door.

"'Is Maître Nicolas here?' inquired the little man. You know that was the name that rascally royalist entered on my books.

"'Yes, monsieur,' I answered.

"'Tell him the person he is expecting from Avignon is here.'

"'With pleasure, monsieur, but it is my duty to warn you.'

"'Of what?'

"'That Maître Nicolas, as you call him, is dying.'

"'The more reason why you should do my bidding without any delay.'

"'But you do not know, perhaps, that he is dying of a malignant fever.'

"'Indeed?' said the man; 'then there is still greater need for you to hurry?'

"'What! you persist?'

"'Yes.'

"'In spite of the danger?'

"'In spite of everything. I tell you I must see him.'

"The little man was getting angry and spoke in an imperious tone that admitted of no reply.

"Consequently I led him to the chamber of the dying man."

"Then he is there," said Chicot, pointing in the direction of the chamber.

"He is there; is it not funny?"

"Exceedingly funny," answered Chicot.

"How unfortunate that we can't hear them!"

"Yes, it is unfortunate."

"The scene must be quite comical."

"Comical to the highest degree; but what hinders you from entering?"

"He dismissed me."

"Under what pretext?"

"He said he was going to confess."

"What hinders you from listening at the door?"

"You're right," said the innkeeper, darting out of the room.

Chicot at once ran to his hole.

Pierre de Gondy sat by the sick man's pillow, but they spoke so low that he could not hear a single word of their conversation.

Moreover, even had he heard this conversation, now drawing to its close, he would have learned little. At the end of five minutes M. de Gondy rose, took leave of the dying man, and retired.

Chicot ran to the window. A lackey, mounted on a crop-eared horse, held the bridle of the big charger of which Bernouillet had spoken; a moment later the Guise's ambassador made his appearance, leaped into the saddle, and turned the corner of the street, which led into the Rue de Paris.

"*Mordieu!*" said Chicot, "I hope he has n't taken the genealogy along with him; in any case, I 'll come up with him, though I have to kill half a score of horses in order to do so."

"But no," said he, "these lawyers are cunning as foxes, mine particularly, and I suspect — Where in the devil, I wonder," continued Chicot, stamping the floor impatiently and evidently having got hold of another idea connected with the first one, "where in the devil is that rascal Gorenflot?"

At this moment the innkeeper returned.

"Well?" asked Chicot.

"He is gone," said his host.

"The confessor?"

"As much a confessor as I am."

"And the sick man?"

"Fainted, I understand, after the conference."

"You 're quite sure he 's still in his room?"

"What a question! he 'll probably never leave it except for the cemetery."

"Very well, that is all I wanted; please send me my relative as soon as he comes in."

"Even if he is tipsy?"

"No matter how he is."

"The case is then urgent?"

"Yes, the good of the cause is at stake."

Bernouillet hurried out immediately; he was a man of zeal.

It was now Chicot's turn to have a fever; he was undecided whether he should run after Gondy or force himself on David. If the lawyer was as ill as the innkeeper claimed, it was probable he had given all his despatches to M. de Gondy. Chicot stalked up and down his room like a madman, striking his forehead and trying to find an idea among the millions of globules bubbling in his brain.

He could hear nothing in the next chamber, and all he could see was a corner of the bedstead enveloped in its curtains.

Suddenly a voice resounded on the staircase. Chicot started; it was that of the monk.

Gorenflot, pushed along by the innkeeper, who was making vain efforts to keep him silent, was mounting the stairs, step by step, and singing in a tipsy voice:

"Wine, Wine
And Sorrow combine
To muddle and rattle this poor head of mine.
And then they 've a tussle,
And wrestle, and hustle
To stay in the fort that the pair have assailed.
But which is the stronger
I cannot doubt longer,
For Sorrow to keep her position has failed,
Which she 's forced to resign
To Wine, Wine!"

Chicot ran to the door.

"Silence, drunkard!" he shouted.

"Drunkard!" stammered Gorenflot, "well, yes, I have drunk!"

"Come here, I say; and you, Bernouillet, know what you 're to do."

"Yes," said the innkeeper, making a sign of intelligence and descending the stairs four steps at a time.

"Come here, I say," continued Chicot, dragging the monk into the room, "and let us talk seriously, that is, if talk seriously you can."

"*Parbleu!* you must be joking, comrade," said Gorenflot. "I am as serious as an ass is when he 's drinking."

"Or when he 's drunk," retorted Chicot, with a shrug.

Then he led him to a chair, into which the monk dropped with an "ah!" expressive of the most intense relief.

Chicot shut the door and came back to Gorenflot with a face so grave that the latter understood he should have to listen.

"Well, now, what *more* have you against me?" said the monk, with an emphasis on *more* that was eloquent as to all the persecutions Chicot had made him endure.

"There is this more," answered Chicot, roughly, "that you do not think sufficiently of the duties of your profession; you wallow in drunkenness and gluttony and let religion take care of itself, *corbœuf!*"

Gorenflot turned his big eyes on his censor in amazement.

"I?" said he.

"Yes, you; look at yourself, you 're a disgrace to be seen. Your robe is torn, and you must have fought on the way, for there 's a black ring round your left eye."

"I?" repeated Gorenflot, more and more astonished at being lectured in a style to which, certainly, Chicot had not hitherto accustomed him.

"Of course, I mean you; you have mud above your knees, and what mud! white mud, which proves you got tipsy in the suburbs."

"Faith, I 'm afraid it 's all true," said Gorenflot.

"Unhappy man! a Genevièvan monk! why, even in a Franciscan it would be horrible!"

"Chicot, my friend, I must, then, be very guilty!" said Gorenflot, with deep feeling.

"So guilty that you deserve to be burnt in hell's fire down to your very sandals. Beware! if this continue, I 'll have nothing more to do with you."

"Ah! Chicot, my friend, you would never do that," said the monk.

"Would n't I, though? and, besides, there are archers in Lyons."

"Oh! my beloved protector, spare me!" stammered the monk, who not only wept, but roared in his agony like a bull.

"Faugh! what a disgusting animal you are become, and that, too, at the very moment our neighbor is dying! Was this the time, I ask you, to misbehave as you have done?"

"True, true," answered Gorenflot, with an air of the deepest contrition.

"Come, let us see, are you a Christian? — yes or no!"

"Am I a Christian?" cried Gorenflot, rising, "am I a Christian? I am, and ready to proclaim my faith, though you stretch me on the gridiron of St. Lawrence!"

And with arm uplifted as if in the act of swearing, he began to sing in a voice that shook the windows:

"I am a Christian man,
Deny it no one can."

"Stop, stop," said Chicot, placing his hand over the monk's mouth. "Then, if you are, you ought not to let your brother die without confession."

"You are right; where is my brother? I 'll confess him at once," said Gorenflot, "that is, when I have had a drink, for I am dying of thirst."

Chicot passed him a jug of water, which he nearly emptied.

"Ah! my son," said he, as he laid the jug on the table, "things are beginning to look clearer to me."

"That 's very fortunate," answered Chicot, who determined to profit by this lucid interval.

"And now, my tender friend," continued the monk, "whom am I to confess?"

"Our unhappy neighbor, who is dying."

"They ought to give him a pint of wine with honey in it," said Gorenflot.

"You may be right, but he has more need of spiritual than of temporal succor at present, and that you must procure for him."

"Do you think I am in a fit state myself to do so, M. Chicot?" inquired the monk, timidly.

"You! I never saw you so full of unction in my life. You will lead him back to the right road if he has strayed from it, and if he is looking for it you will send him straight to Paradise."

"I 'm off, then, immediately."

"Wait. I want to point out to you the course you 're to follow."

"Why so? I ought to know my business after being twenty years a monk."

"Yes, but, to-day, you have not only to do your business but my will."

"Your will?"

"And if you execute it practically — are you listening? — I will deposit a hundred pistoles at the *Corne d'Abondance*, to be spent in eating or drinking, just as you choose."

"To be spent in eating *and* drinking; I like that better."

"That 's your look-out — a hundred pistoles for confessing this worthy man who is dying, do you understand?"

"I 'll confess him, plague take me if I don't! How am I to set about it?"

"Listen: your robe gives you great authority; you must speak in the name of God and of the King, and, by your eloquent exhortations compel this man to give up the papers that were lately brought to him from Avignon."

"And why am I to compel him to give me up these papers?"

Chicot looked at the monk pityingly.

"To gain a thousand livres, you double-dyed idiot," said he.

"All right," returned Gorenflot, "I 'll go to him."

"Stop. He will tell you he has just made his confession."

"But, if he has confessed already" —

"You 'll tell him he lies, that the man who left him was not a confessor, but an intriguer like himself."

"But he 'll get angry."

"What need you care, since he 's dying?"

"Right again."

"Now you understand, don't you? Speak of God, speak of the devil, speak of anything you like; but, however you go about it, make sure you get the papers out of his clutches."

"And if he refuse to surrender them?"

"Refuse him absolution, curse him, anathematize him."

"Or shall I take them by force?"

"Oh, any way you like. But, let us see, have you sobered up enough to execute my instructions?"

"You 'll see. They shall be executed to the letter."

And Gorenflot, as he passed his hand over his broad face, apparently wiped away all surface traces of his late intoxica-

tion: his eyes became calm, although, to those who examined them keenly, they had still a besotted look; he articulated his words with more or less distinctness; and his gestures were made with a certain degree of steadiness, interrupted by an occasional tremble.

After he had spoken, he marched to the door with great solemnity.

"A moment," said Chicot; "when he gives you the papers, secure them with one hand and rap on the wall with the other."

"And if he refuse them?"

"All the same, rap."

"So in either case I am to rap?"

"Yes."

"I understand."

And Gorenflot passed out of the room, while Chicot, whose emotion was now uncontrollable, glued his ear to the wall, anxious to catch the faintest sound.

Ten minutes later the groaning of the floor in his neighbor's room announced that Gorenflot had entered, and the Gascon was soon enabled to get a glimpse of him in the narrow circle embraced by his visual ray.

The lawyer rose up in his bed and looked with wonder at his strange visitor.

"Ah! good-day, my dear brother," said Gorenflot, halting in the middle of the room, and balancing his broad shoulders.

"What brings you here, father?" murmured the sick man, in a feeble voice.

"My son, I am an unworthy monk; I have been told you are in danger, and I have come to speak to you of your soul."

"Thanks," said the invalid, "but I do not believe your care is needed. I feel a little better."

Gorenflot shook his head.

"You think so?" said he.

"I am sure of it."

"One of the wiles of Satan, who would like to see you die without confession."

"Then Satan would be baffled," said the sick man. "I confessed only a short while ago."

"To whom?"

"To a priest from Avignon."

Gorenflot shook his head.

"What do you mean? that he was not a priest?"

"That is my meaning."

"How do you know?"

"I know who he was."

"The man who just left me?"

"Yes," answered Gorenflot, in a tone of such conviction that, hard as it is to upset a lawyer, this one was disturbed.

"Now, as you are not getting better," said Gorenflot, "and as this man was not a priest, you must confess."

"I am perfectly willing," said the lawyer, in a voice that had grown perceptibly stronger; "but I intend confessing to whomsoever I choose."

"You have no time to send for another priest, my son, and, as I am here" —

"What! I have no time?" cried the invalid, in a voice that was louder and firmer even than before; "have I not told you that I am better? Am I not telling you now that I am sure to recover?"

Gorenflot shook his head for the third time.

"And I," said he, in the same phlegmatic manner, "I tell you, on the other hand, my son, that there is not the slightest hope for you. You are condemned by the doctors and also by Divine Providence; you may think me cruel in saying so, — very likely you do, — but this is a thing to which we must all come sooner or later. Justice must weigh us in her scales, and surely it ought to be a consolation to us to sink in this life, since thereby we rise into the other life. Pythagoras himself said so, my brother, and yet he was but a pagan. Therefore you must confess, my dear child."

"But I assure you, father, I have grown stronger, even since you entered, the effect, I presume, of your holy presence."

"A mistake, my son, a mistake," persisted Gorenflot; "there is at the last moment a vital resuscitation; the lamp flares up at the end, and then goes out forever. Come, now," continued the monk, sitting down at the bedside, "tell me of your intrigues, your plots, and all your machinations."

"My intrigues, my plots, and all my machinations!" repeated Nicolas David, shrinking back from this singular monk whom he did not know, and who seemed to know him so well.

"Yes," said Gorenflot, quietly arranging his large ears for their auricular duties and joining his two thumbs above his

interlaced fingers; "then, after you have told me everything, you will give me the papers, and perhaps God will allow me to absolve you."

"What papers?" cried the invalid, in a voice as strong and in tones as vigorous as if he had been in the best of health.

"The papers this pretended priest brought you from Avignon."

"And who told you this pretended priest brought me papers?" asked the lawyer, stretching a leg out from under the bedclothes and speaking so roughly that the monk was shaken out of a tendency to drowsiness that was beginning to affect him in his comfortable armchair.

Gorenflot thought the moment had come for a display of energy.

"He who told me knows what he told me," he returned; "come, come, the papers, or no absolution!"

"To the devil with your absolution, you scoundrel!" cried David, leaping out of bed and jumping at Gorenflot's throat.

"Why," cried the monk, "your fever is more violent than ever! and you won't confess! are you" —

The lawyer's thumb, adroitly and vigorously applied to the monk's throat, interrupted the last phrase, which ended in a whistle that was not unlike a rattle.

"I am going now to force you to confess, you shaveling of Beelzebub," cried David, "and as for my fever, you'll soon see it won't hinder me from strangling you."

Brother Gorenflot was robust, but he was, unfortunately, in that state of reaction when drunkenness acts on the nervous system and paralyzes it, which ordinarily occurs at the time when, by a contrary reaction, the mental powers are beginning to recover their vigor.

All he could do, then, was, by using whatever strength was left him, to rise from his chair, seize David's shirt with both hands, and thrust him back violently.

It is but just to say that, paralyzed as Brother Gorenflot was, he thrust Nicolas David back so violently that the latter fell in the middle of the room.

But he rose furious, and, seizing a long sword that hung on the wall behind his clothes, the same long sword that had been noticed by Maître Bernouillet, he drew it from the scabbard and presented the point at the neck of the monk, who, exhausted by his last effort, had fallen back on his chair.

"It is now your turn to confess," said he, in a hollow voice, "or else you die!"

Gorenflot, completely sobered by the disagreeable pressure of cold steel against his flesh, comprehended the gravity of the situation.

"Oh!" said he, "then you were not sick; your pretended agony was all a farce, was it?"

"You forget that it is not for you to question but to answer," retorted the lawyer.

"Answer what?"

"Whatever I choose to ask you."

"Ask, then."

"Who are you?"

"You can see for yourself," said the monk.

"That is not an answer," returned the lawyer, pressing the sword a little.

"Have a care, man! What the devil! If you kill me before I answer, you'll know nothing at all."

"You are right; your name?"

"Brother Gorenflot."

"You are a real monk, then?"

"A real monk? Of course I am."

"What brought you to Lyons?"

"I am exiled."

"What brought you to this hotel?"

"Chance."

"How long have you been here?"

"Sixteen days."

"Why were you spying on me?"

"I was not spying on you."

"How did you know I had received papers?"

"Because I had been told so."

"Who told you?"

"The man who sent me to you."

"Who sent you to me?"

"I cannot tell you."

"But you will tell me, nevertheless."

"Oh, oh! stop!" cried the monk. "*Vertudieu!* I'll cry out, I'll shout."

"And I'll kill you."

The monk uttered a cry; a drop of blood appeared on the point of the lawyer's sword.

"His name?" said the latter.

"Ah! well, well, so much the worse," said the monk, "I have held out as long as I could."

"Yes, yes, you have safeguarded your honor. The man who sent you to me, then" —

"It was" —

Gorenflot still hesitated; it cost him a good deal to betray his friend.

"Make an end of it, I say," cried the lawyer, with a stamp on the floor.

"Faith, so much the worse! It was Chicot."

"The King's jester?"

"The same."

"And where is he?"

"Here!" cried a voice.

And Chicot stood on the threshold, pale, stern, with a naked sword in his hand.

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW CHICOT, AFTER MAKING A HOLE WITH A GIMLET, MAKES ONE WITH HIS SWORD.

As soon as Maître Nicolas David recognized the man he knew for his mortal enemy, he could not repress a movement of terror.

Gorenflot took advantage of this movement to slip to one side and so break the rectilinearity of the line between his neck and the hilt of the lawyer's sword.

"Help, dear friend!" he cried; "murder! help! Save me!"

"Aha! indeed! So, then, my dear M. David," said Chicot, "it is really you?"

"Yes," stammered David; "yes, it is I, undoubtedly."

"Enchanted to have the pleasure of meeting you," returned the Gascon.

Then, turning to the monk:

"My good Gorenflot," said he, "your presence as a monk was necessary a while ago, when we believed that the gentleman was dying; but now that the gentleman is evidently in the enjoyment of marvellous good health, he no longer needs a

confessor, but rather to transact a little business with another gentleman ; this time, a gentleman by birth."

David tried to sneer contemptuously.

"Yes, a gentleman, in the proper sense of the term," said Chicot, "and one who will prove to you that he comes of good stock. My dear Gorenflot," said he, addressing the monk, "do me the favor to go and stand as sentinel on the landing, and see to it that no one, whoever he may be, interrupt the little conversation I am about to have with this gentleman."

Gorenflot asked no better than to get as far away as possible from Nicolas David. As soon as he had made the circuit it was necessary to describe for this purpose, clinging to the walls as closely as he could, he rushed out of the chamber, a hundred pounds lighter than when he entered it.

Chicot, as calm as ever, closed the door behind him and then bolted it.

At first David had viewed these proceedings with an agitation that naturally resulted from the unexpected nature of the situation ; but he soon recovered his self-control ; he had confidence in his skill as a swordsman, and he had only a single opponent to deal with. When the Gascon turned round after shutting the door, he saw the lawyer waiting for him at the foot of the bed, his sword in his hand and a smile on his lips.

"Dress yourself, monsieur," said Chicot. "I will give you time to do so, for I do not wish to take any advantage of you. I know you are a valiant fencer and handle the sword as well as Le Clerc himself ; but that is all the same to me."

Nicolas David gave a short laugh.

"Your jest is good," said he.

"Yes," answered Chicot ; "so it appears to me, at least, — I suppose because I made it, — but it will appear to you even better in a moment, for you are a man of taste. Do you know what I have come into this room for, Maître Nicolas ? "

"The balance of the blows I owed you in the Duc de Mayenne's name, ever since the day you jumped so nimbly out of the window."

"No, monsieur ; I remember the number and will, you may rest assured, return them to the man who ordered them to be given me. What I have come for is a certain genealogy carried to Avignon by M. Pierre de Gondy, who knew not what he was carrying, brought back again by M. Pierre de

Gondy, who knew not what he was bringing back, and placed by him in your hands a short while ago."

David turned pale.

"What genealogy?" said he.

"The genealogy of the Guises, who, as you know, are descended from Charlemagne in the direct line."

"Ah! ah!" said David, "you are a spy, monsieur; I used to think you were only a buffoon."

"My dear monsieur, I will be both, if you like, on the present occasion: a spy to hang you, and a buffoon to make merry over the hanging."

"To hang me!"

"High and dry, monsieur. You do not claim, I hope, that you have a right to be beheaded; that right appertains only to gentlemen."

"And how will you go about it?"

"Oh, the thing is very simple: I will relate the truth, that 's all that is necessary. I may as well tell you, my dear M. David, that I was present, last month, at the little conventicle held in the convent of Sainte Geneviève between their Most Serene Highnesses the Guises and Madame de Montpensier."

"You?"

"Yes, I was in the confessional facing yours; very uncomfortable, are they not? the more so in my case, at least, because I could not leave till all was over, and the affair was of unconscionable length. I was, therefore, present at the speeches of M. de Monsoreau, La Hurière, and a certain monk whose name I have forgotten, but whom I thought very eloquent. I know all about the coronation of M. d'Anjou, which was not particularly amusing; but, on the other hand, the afterpiece was very laughable. They played: 'The Genealogy of Messieurs de Lorraine, revised, augmented, and corrected by Maître Nicolas David.' It was a very droll farce, lacking only the sign manual of his Holiness."

"Ah! you know about the genealogy?" said David, almost beside himself and biting his lips in his rage.

"Yes," said Chicot, "and I found it wonderfully ingenious, especially the part about the Salic law. Only so much cleverness is rather a misfortune, after all; the possessor of it often gets hanged. Consequently, inspired with tender pity for a man so gifted — 'What!' said I to myself, 'shall I let them hang this worthy M. David, the most agreeable of fencing-

masters, the most astute of lawyers, and my very good friend besides, and that, too, when I can not only save him from the rope, but also make the fortune of this admirable advocate, this excellent fencing-master, this kind-hearted friend, the first who, by taking the measure of my back, showed me how to take the measure of my heart; no, such shall not be the case.' Whereupon, having heard that you intended to travel, I determined to travel with, or rather behind, you. You came out by the Porte Bordelle, did you not? I was watching you. You did not see me, and that is not surprising, for I was well concealed. From that moment I have followed you, losing you, catching up with you, taking a great deal of trouble, I assure you. At last we reached Lyons — I say *we*, because, an hour after you, I entered the same hotel, and not only entered the same hotel, but hired the room next to yours. Look, it is separated from yours only by a mere partition; you can well imagine I did not come all the way from Paris to Lyons to lose sight of you here. No, I made a little hole through which I had the privilege of observing you whenever I liked, and I confess I gave myself this pleasure several times a day. At last, you fell sick; the innkeeper wanted to turn you out of doors. But you had made an appointment with M. de Gondy at the Cygne de la Croix; you were afraid he might not find you elsewhere, or, at least, not find you soon enough. The stratagem you adopted only half deceived me; however, as, after all, you might be really ill, for we are all mortal, a truth of which I will try to convince you later on, I sent you a worthy monk, my friend and comrade, to endeavor to excite you to repentance, to arouse in you a feeling of remorse. But in vain; hardened sinner that you are, you wanted to pierce his neck with your rapier, forgetting this maxim of the Gospel: 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' Therefore, my dear M. David, I come to you and say: 'We are old acquaintances, old friends; let us arrange the matter.' Are you willing to do so?"

"In what manner?"

"In the manner in which it would have been arranged if you had been really ill, and if, after my friend Gorenflot had confessed you, you had handed him the papers he asked for. Then I would have pardoned you and even said a sincere *in manus* for your soul's salvation. Well, I will not be more exacting in the case of the living than I would be in the case of

the dead, and what I have to say to you is this: 'M. David, you are an accomplished man. Fencing, horsemanship, chicanery, the art of putting fat purses into big pockets — you are skilful in them all. It would be sad if such a man as you suddenly disappeared from that world in which he was destined to have such brilliant fortune. Well, then, dear M. David, engage in no more conspiracies, trust to me, break with the Guises, give me your papers, and I pledge you my word as a gentleman that I will make your peace with the King.'"

"While, on the contrary, if I do not give them"— inquired Nicolas David.

"Ah! if you do not give them, it is another thing. In that case, I pledge you my honor I will kill you! Does that still seem amusing to you, dear M. David?"

"More so than ever," answered the lawyer, toying with his sword.

"But if you give them to me," continued Chicot, "all shall be forgotten. You may not, perhaps, believe me, dear M. David, for you have an evil nature, and you fancy that my heart is coated with resentment as iron is coated with rust. No; it is true I hate you, but I hate M. de Mayenne more. Give me the means of ruining him and I will save you. And then, will you allow me to utter a few words more which you will not believe, for you love nothing but yourself? I love the King, love him, though I know that he is silly, corrupt, degenerate; yes, I love the King who protected and sheltered me from your butcher Mayenne that assassinated a single gentleman at the Place du Louvre at the head of fifteen bandits. You know of whom I speak, of poor Saint-Mégrin; were you not one of his murderers? No? So much the better, I believed you were, and I am sure of it now. Well, I want him to reign in peace, this poor King Henri of mine, a thing utterly impossible with your Mayennes and your Nicolas David genealogies. Deliver that genealogy to me, then, and I pledge you my honor I'll conceal your name and make your fortune."

During this lengthened exposition of his ideas, and its length was not without a purpose, Chicot was observing David with his keen and intelligent eyes, and not once did he see the lawyer's features soften, not once did he see the feeling that springs from a kindly thought sweep over that gloomy countenance, or a heartfelt emotion relax the convulsive clutch of that nervous hand on the sword-hilt.

"Well," said Chicot, "I see that all my eloquence is lost and you do not believe me. But I have a way to punish you, first, for the injury you did me of old, and then, to rid the earth of a man who believes neither in honesty nor justice. I am going to have you hanged. Adieu, M. David."

And he stepped back toward the door, all the time keeping his eye on the lawyer.

David bounded forward.

"And you think I shall let you depart?" cried the lawyer. "No, no, my fine spy; no, no, Chicot, my friend; when a man knows a secret like that of the genealogy, he dies! When a man threatens Nicolas David, he dies! When a man enters here as you have entered, he dies!"

"You make me quite easy in my mind," answered Chicot, with his usual calmness. "I hesitated only because I am sure to kill you. Crillon taught me, two months ago, while I was practising with him, a peculiar kind of lunge, only a single thrust, but all that is needed, I pledge you my word. Come, hand me the papers," he cried in a terrible voice, "or I kill you! And I will tell you how: I will pierce your throat just in the very spot where you wanted to bleed my friend Gorenflot."

Almost before Chicot had finished these words, David rushed upon him, with a savage outburst of laughter; Chicot awaited him, sword in hand.

The two adversaries were pretty evenly matched in size; but Chicot's clothes concealed his spareness, while nothing hid the lank, slender, flexible figure of the lawyer. He was not unlike some long serpent, his nimble sword moving with lightning rapidity in this direction and that, as if it were the serpent's triple fang. But he found a dangerous antagonist in Chicot, as the latter had told him. In fact, the Gascon, who fenced almost every day with the King, had become one of the most skilful swordsmen in the kingdom. Nicolas David soon began to perceive this, for, no matter how he attacked his enemy, the latter always foiled him.

He retreated a step.

"Ah!" said Chicot, "now you are beginning to understand, are you? Once more; give me the papers."

David's only answer was to throw himself again upon the Gascon, and a new combat ensued, longer and fiercer than the first, although Chicot contented himself with parrying, and had not yet struck a blow.

This second contest ended, like the first, in a backward step by the lawyer.

"Ah, ah!" said Chicot; "my turn now."

And he took a step forward.

While he was advancing, Nicolas David made ready to stop him. Chicot parried in prime, beat down his adversary's guard, reached the spot where he had declared his intention of striking David, and plunged his sword half its length through his enemy's throat.

"That is the stroke," said he.

David did not answer, but fell at Chicot's feet, pouring out a mouthful of blood.

And now it was Chicot's turn to retreat a step. Wounded though it be, the serpent can still rear its head, and sting.

But David, by a natural impulse, tried to drag himself toward his bed so as to defend his secret to the last.

"Ah!" said Chicot, "I thought you as cunning as a fox; but, on the contrary, you are as stupid as a reiter. I did not know where the papers were, and now you tell me."

And while David struggled in the agonies of death, Chicot ran to the bed, raised the mattress, and under it found a little roll of parchment, which the lawyer, in his ignorance of the catastrophe that menaced him, had not dreamed of concealing more securely.

At the very moment he unrolled it to make sure it was the document he was in search of, rage gave David strength to rise; then he fell back and expired.

Chicot ran over the parchment brought by Pierre de Gondy, his eyes sparkling with joy and pride.

The legate of the Pope, faithful to the policy of the sovereign pontiff since his accession to the throne, had written at the bottom:

"*Fiat ut Deus voluit: Deus jura hominum fecit.*"

"Hum!" muttered Chicot, "this Pope is rather hard on our most Christian King."

And folding the parchment carefully, he introduced it into the safest pocket in his doublet, namely, the one next his breast.

Then he lifted the body of the lawyer, who had died without losing more blood, the nature of the wound making him bleed inwardly, put it back again in the bed, turned the face to the wall, and, opening the door, called Gorenflot.

CHICOT RAN OVER THE PARCHMENT BROUGHT BY PIERRE DE GONDY, HIS EYES SPARKLING WITH JOY AND PRIDE.

Gorenflot entered.

"How pale you are!" said the monk.

"Yes," said Chicot, "the last moments of this poor man have caused me some emotion."

"Is he dead?" asked Gorenflot.

"There is every reason to think so," answered Chicot.

"But he was so well a while ago."

"Too well. He insisted on swallowing something hard to digest, and, as in the case of Anacreon, the morsel went the wrong way."

"Oho!" said Gorenflot, "and the rascal wanted to strangle me — me, an ecclesiastic! No wonder he has been unfortunate!"

"Pardon him, comrade, you are a Christian."

"I do pardon him," answered Gorenflot, "although he gave me an awful fright."

"That is not enough," said Chicot; "you must light some tapers and say a few prayers beside his body."

"Why?"

This "why" was, it will have been noticed, Gorenflot's customary interrogative.

"What do you mean by your 'why'? Well, then, there is danger that you may be dragged to prison as his murderer."

"I this man's murderer! Oh, nonsense! It was he who wanted to strangle me."

"Of course, I know that, and as he could not succeed, his fury set his blood violently in motion; a vessel burst inside his breast, and so he has crossed the ferry. You see, then, that, taking it all in all, you are the cause of his death, Gorenflot. The innocent cause, 't is true. But, nevertheless, you might have a good deal to suffer before your innocence was proved."

"I think, M. Chicot, you are right," said the monk.

"The more so as the official in the city who deals with such matters happens to be a rather tough customer."

"Jesus!" murmured the monk.

"Do what I tell you, then, comrade."

"What am I to do?"

"Stay here in this room, recite piously all the prayers you know, and even all the prayers you don't know, and when evening comes and you are alone, leave this hostelry, neither at a snail's pace nor yet in a hurry. You are acquainted with the farrier who lives at the corner of the street?"

"Certainly; it was he who gave me this last night," said Gorenflot, pointing to his black eye.

"Touching remembrance! Well, I'll see to it that you find your horse there. Now, pay particular attention: you will mount your horse and take the road to Paris; at Villeneuve le Roi you will sell him and take back Panurge."

"Ah! my good Panurge! You are right, I shall be delighted to see him again; I love him. But," added the monk, piteously, "how am I to live on the way?"

"When I give, I give," answered Chicot, "and I do not let my friends go a-begging, as yours do at the convent of St. Geneviève; hold."

And Chicot drew from his pocket a fistful of crowns, which he poured into the monk's big hand.

"Generous man!" exclaimed Gorenflot, moved even to tears, "let me remain with you in Lyons. I am fond of Lyons; it is the second capital of the realm, and a most hospitable capital it is."

"Now, try and understand one thing, at least, you dunderhead! The thing you must understand is that I do not remain here, that I am about to start for Paris, and shall ride so fast you never could keep up with me."

"Thy will be done, M. Chicot!" said the monk, resignedly.

"Now you are as you ought to be!" said Chicot; "I love you best when you are in the mood you are at present."

And, after installing the monk at the side of the bed, he went downstairs to see his host.

"Maître Bernouillet," he said, taking him aside, "a great event has occurred in your house, although you have not the slightest suspicion of it."

"Goodness!" exclaimed the innkeeper, looking scared, "what has happened?"

"That malignant royalist, that despiser of religion, that abominable frequenter of Huguenots" —

"Well?"

"Received the visit of a messenger from Rome this morning."

"I know all that; it was I who informed you of the fact."

"Well, then, our Holy Father the Pope, who is the temporal justiciary of this world, sent this man directly to this conspirator — but the conspirator probably never suspected for what purpose."

"And for what purpose did he send him?"

"Go up to the chamber of your guest, M. Bernouillet, turn up the end of the bedclothes, look in the neighborhood of the neck, and you will know."

"Mercy on us! you frighten me."

"I say no more. The sentence has been executed in your house. The Pope has done you a signal honor, Maître Bernouillet."

Thereupon Chicot slipped ten gold crowns into his host's hands and went to the stables, from which he led out the two horses.

Meanwhile the innkeeper flew upstairs more lightly than a bird, and entered the chamber of Maître Nicolas David.

He found Gorenflot praying.

He drew near the bed, and, as he had been instructed to do, raised the bedclothes.

The wound, still red, was in the place mentioned; but the body was already cold.

"May all the enemies of our holy religion die thus!" said Bernouillet, making a significant gesture to Gorenflot.

"Amen!" answered the monk.

These events took place almost at the same time that Bussy restored Diane de Méridor to the arms of her father, who had believed her dead.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW THE DUC D'ANJOU DISCOVERED THAT DIANE WAS NOT DEAD.

During this time the last days of April had arrived.

The great cathedral of Chartres was hung with white, and the pillars were garlanded with foliage which took the place of the absent flowers.

The King was standing in the middle of the nave, barefooted, as indeed, was the case ever since he had entered the city through the Porte de Chartres. He looked round occasionally to see if all his friends and courtiers had faithfully kept their appointment. But some of them whose feet had been flayed by the rough streets had put on their shoes again; others, being either hungry or tired, were eating or sleeping in some of the hostelries on the route, into which they had stolen on the sly;

and only a small number had the courage to stay in the church on the damp floor, with bare legs under their penitent robes.

The religious ceremony, which was for the purpose of praying for an heir to the throne of France, was drawing to an end. The two chemises of Our Lady, which, on account of the numerous miracles they had wrought, had a high reputation for their prolific virtue, had been taken from their shrines of gold, and the people, who had come in crowds to witness this solemnity, bowed their heads beneath the burning rays that flashed from the tabernacle when the two tunics were drawn from it.

Henri III. heard a strange sound amid the general silence; it was like a burst of stifled laughter, and, from habit, he looked to see if Chicot was not there, for, to his mind, none but Chicot would have dared to laugh at such a moment.

It was not Chicot, however. Chicot, alas! was absent, a source of much sorrow to the King, who, it will be remembered, had lost sight of him suddenly on the Fontainebleau highway and not heard of him since. This was a cavalier who had been carried to the church by a horse that was still steaming, and who had made his way with his muddy boots and soiled clothes through the barefooted courtiers in their penitent robes and sacks.

Although he saw the King turn round, he stood boldly in the choir, for this cavalier was a courtier, as was denoted by his attitude even more than by the elegance of his costume.

Henri, irritated at seeing so unpunctual a cavalier making such a noise and exhibiting by his dress so insolent a disregard for the monastic garb that had been prescribed for the day, darted a glance at him that was full of reproof and anger.

The newcomer did not pretend to perceive it, and, crossing some flagstone upon which were carved the effigies of certain bishops, he knelt beside the velvet chair of M. le Duc d'Anjou, who, being absorbed in his thoughts rather than in his prayers, was not paying the slightest attention to what was passing around him.

However, when he felt the touch of this newcomer, he turned quickly, and, in a low voice, exclaimed:

"Bussy!"

"Good-day, monseigneur," answered the cavalier, as indifferently as if he had left the duke the evening before and nothing unusual had occurred since they were together.

"But," said the prince, "are you crazy?"

"Why so, monseigneur?"

"To leave any place, no matter where, and come here to see the chemises of Our Lady."

"The reason is, monseigneur, that I must speak with you immediately."

"Why did you not come sooner?"

"Probably because I could not."

"But what has occurred during the three weeks you have disappeared?"

"That is just what I want to speak to you about."

"Well, you must wait until we get out of the church."

"Alas! I see I must, and that is the very thing that annoys me."

"Hush! we 're at the end; have patience, and we 'll go home together."

"It is what I reckoned on doing, monseigneur."

The ceremony, as the prince stated, was nearly over. The King had just passed the rather coarse chemise of Our Lady over his own fine linen, and the Queen, aided by her maids of honor, was now doing the same.

Then the King knelt and the Queen imitated him; both remained for a moment in earnest prayer under a vast canopy, while the courtiers prostrated themselves on the floor, with a view to gaining the good graces of their sovereign.

After this, the King rose, doffed the holy tunic, saluted the archbishop, saluted the Queen, and proceeded to the door of the cathedral.

But he stopped on the way: he had perceived Bussy.

"Ah! monsieur," said he, "it would seem our devotions are not to your taste, else you would hardly wear gold and silk when your sovereign wears drugget and serge."

"Sire," answered Bussy, with dignity, though his impatience under the rebuke made him change color, "no one, even among those whose garb is humblest and whose feet are most lacerated, has a keener zeal for your Majesty's service than I. But I have arrived after a long and wearisome journey, and I only learned this morning of your Majesty's departure for Chartres; I have, therefore, travelled twenty-two leagues in five hours, sire, for the purpose of joining your Majesty; that is the reason I had not time to change my dress, a circumstance your Majesty, for that matter, would never have noticed if, instead

of coming to unite my humble prayers with yours, I had remained in Paris."

The King appeared satisfied, but, when he perceived that his friends shrugged their shoulders during Bussy's explanation, he feared to offend them by showing any favor to his brother's gentleman, and went on.

Bussy, not troubled in the slightest, let him pass.

"What!" said the Duc d'Anjou, "did you not see?"

"See what?"

"Schomberg, Quélus, and Maugiron shrugging their shoulders at your expense."

"Oh, yes, monseigneur, I saw all that perfectly," answered Bussy, with great calmness.

"Well?"

"Well! do you believe I am going to cut the throats of my fellow-men in a church, or, at least, quite close to one? I am too good a Christian to think of it."

"Oh, all right," said the Duc d'Anjou, in amazement; "I imagined that either you did not see or did not wish to see."

Bussy shrugged his shoulders in his turn, and, taking the prince aside, when they were out of the church:

"We are going to your lodgings, are we not, monseigneur?" he inquired.

"Immediately, for you ought certainly to have a good deal to tell me."

"Yes, monseigneur, you guess correctly; I am perfectly sure of certain things of which you have no suspicion."

The duke looked at Bussy in open-eyed amazement.

"Well, let me salute the King, and I am with you."

The prince went and took leave of his brother, who gave him permission to return to Paris whenever he liked.

Then, returning to Bussy with all speed, he took him with him to one of the apartments in the hotel assigned him as a residence.

"Now, my friend," said he, "sit down there, and tell me of all your adventures. Do you know I thought you were dead?"

"I can well imagine it, monseigneur."

"Do you know that every one at court dressed in white to mark his joy at your disappearance, and that many a breast has breathed freely for the first time since you could draw a sword? But that is not the question at present. Well, then,

you left me to follow the track of a beautiful unknown! Who was this woman and what am I to hope for?"

"You must reap what you have sown, monseigneur, that is to say, a considerable harvest of shame!"

"What do you mean?" inquired the duke, more astonished at the words than even at the disrespectful tone in which they were uttered.

"You have heard me, monseigneur," said Bussy, coldly; "it is useless, then, for me to repeat."

"Explain yourself, monsieur, and leave such enigmas and anagrams to Chicot."

"Oh, nothing is easier, monseigneur; all I have to do is to appeal to your memory."

"But who is this woman?"

"I thought you had recognized her, monseigneur."

"Then it was she!" cried the duke.

"Yes, monseigneur."

"You have seen her?"

"Yes."

"Did she speak?"

"Certainly; it is only ghosts who do not speak. After what had occurred, you had reason to believe her dead, and you may have hoped that she was."

The duke turned pale, crushed by the stern words of him who ought to be his champion.

"Yes, monseigneur," continued Bussy, "although you have driven to martyrdom a young girl of noble birth, that young girl has escaped her martyrdom; but do not breathe yet, do not think yourself absolved, for, though she has saved her life, she has met with a misfortune worse than death."

"What is it? What has happened to her?" said the prince, trembling.

"What has happened to her, monseigneur, is that a man has saved her honor, has saved her life, but his help has cost her so dear that she regrets it was ever rendered."

"Finish, finish, I say."

"Well, then, monseigneur, the Demoiselle de Méridor, to escape from the arms of the Duc d'Anjou, whose mistress she would not be, has flung herself into the arms of a man she execrates."

"What do you say?"

"I say that Diane de Méridor is known to-day as Madame de Monsoreau."

At these words, instead of the paleness that ordinarily was spread over the cheeks of François, such a flush of blood surged to his face that it seemed to gush from his eyes.

"*Sang du Christ!*" cried the prince, furiously, "can this be true?"

"It must be, since I have said it," answered Bussy, haughtily.

"I did not mean that," said the prince, "I never doubted your loyalty, Bussy. I was only wondering if a Monsoreau, one of my own gentlemen, could have dared to interfere between me and a woman I honored with my love."

"And why not?" asked Bussy.

"Then you would have done what he has done — you, too?"

"I would have done more, I would have warned you that you were dishonoring yourself."

"Listen, Bussy," said the duke, becoming suddenly calm, "listen, if you please; you understand, of course, that I do not condescend to justify myself."

"There you are wrong, my prince; where honor is concerned you are only a gentleman, like the rest of us."

"Well, for that very reason, I will ask you to be the judge of M. de Monsoreau."

"I?"

"Yes, you, and to tell me whether he is not a traitor — a traitor to me."

"To you?"

"To me, whose intentions he knew."

"And the intentions of your highness were" —

"Of course, to win the love of Diane."

"To win her love?"

"Yes, but in no case to employ violence."

"Then these were your intentions, monseigneur?" asked Bussy, with an ironical smile.

"Undoubtedly, and these intentions I kept to up to the last moment, although M. de Monsoreau argued against them with all the logic of which he is capable."

"Monseigneur! monseigneur! what is this you say? This man has urged you to dishonor Diane?"

"Yes."

"By his counsels?"

"By his letters. Should you like to see one of them?"

"Oh!" cried Bussy, "if I could believe that!"

"Wait a second and you 'll see."

And the duke ran to his study for a little box, over which a page always kept guard, and took a note from it which he gave to Bussy.

"Read," said he, "since you doubt the word of your prince."

Bussy seized the note, his hand trembling with uncertainty, and read:

"*Monseigneur:*

"Your highness may be at your ease; this enterprise does not involve any risk, for the young lady starts this evening to spend a week with an aunt who lives at the Castle of Lude; I take charge of the whole matter, then, and you need not be anxious. As for the young lady's scruples, I am pretty sure they will vanish when she finds herself in your highness' presence; meanwhile, I act, and this evening she will be in the Castle of Beaugé.

"Of your highness the respectful servant,

"Bryant de Monsoreau."

"Well! what do you say to that, Bussy?" asked the prince, after his gentleman had read the letter a second time.

"I say that you are well served, monseigneur."

"Which means that I am betrayed."

"Ah, you are right; I forgot the end."

"Tricked! the wretch! He made me believe in the death of a woman" —

"He stole from you; his crime is very black, indeed; but," added Bussy, with caustic irony, "M. de Monsoreau's love is an excuse."

"Ah! that is your opinion, is it," said the duke, with his devilish smile.

"Faith," answered Bussy, "I have no opinion on the matter at all; if it 's your opinion it 's my opinion."

"What should you do in my place? But first, wait a moment. What did he do himself?"

"He made the father believe you were the ravisher, offered his help, and appeared at the Castle of Beaugé with a letter from the Baron de Méridor. Then he brought a boat under the windows, carried off the prisoner, shut her up in the house

you know of, and, by constantly working on her fears, forced her to become his wife."

"And is not such treachery infamous?" cried the duke.

"Placed under the shelter of your own, monseigneur," answered Bussy, with his ordinary boldness.

"Ah, Bussy, you shall see how I will avenge myself!"

"Avenge yourself! Nonsense, monseigneur, you will do no such thing."

"Why?"

"Princes do not avenge themselves, monseigneur, they punish. You will charge this Monsoreau with his infamous conduct, and punish him."

"But how?"

"By restoring happiness to Mademoiselle de Méridor."

"And can I?"

"Certainly."

"In what way?"

"By restoring to her her liberty."

"Come, now, explain."

"Nothing more easy; the marriage was forced, therefore it is null."

"You are right."

"Have the marriage annulled, and you will have acted, monseigneur, like a loyal gentleman and a noble prince."

"Ah!" said the prince, suspiciously, "what warmth! You are interested in this, Bussy?"

"I? Not the least in the world, monseigneur; what interests me, monseigneur, is that no one may be able to say that Louis de Clermont, Comte de Bussy, is in the service of a perfidious prince and a dishonorable man."

"Well, you shall see. But how are we to break the marriage?"

"Nothing more easy. Make her father act."

"The Baron de Méridor?"

"Yes."

"But he is away in Anjou."

"No, monseigneur, he is in Paris."

"At your house?"

"No, at his daughter's. Tell him, monseigneur, that he may rely on you, that, instead of regarding you as an enemy, as he does at present, he may regard you as a protector, and he, who cursed your name, will bless it as that of his good genius."

"He is a powerful nobleman in his own country," said the duke, "and is said to be very influential throughout the province."

"Yes, monseigneur, but what you ought to remember before anything else is that he is a father, that his daughter is unhappy, and that her unhappiness is the cause of his."

"And when can I see him?"

"As soon as you return to Paris."

"Very well."

"It is agreed, then, is it not, monseigneur?"

"Yes."

"On your honor as a gentleman?"

"On my honor as a prince."

"And when do you start?"

"This evening. Will you come with me?"

"No, I must precede you."

"Go, and be sure to be at hand."

"I am yours forever, monseigneur. Where shall I find you?"

"At the King's levee, about noon to-morrow."

"I will be there, monseigneur; adieu."

Bussy did not lose a moment, and the distance which it took the duke, sleeping in his litter, fifteen hours to accomplish, the young man, who was returning to Paris in an ecstasy of love and joy, got through in five, in order that he might console the baron, to whom he had offered his help, and comfort Diane, to whom he was about to offer the half of his life.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW CHICOT RETURNED TO THE LOUVRE AND WAS RECEIVED BY KING HENRI III.

Everybody was asleep in the Louvre, for it was not yet eleven in the morning; the sentries in the courtyard seemed to move with cautious footsteps; the gentlemen who relieved guard walked their horses slowly.

The King was exhausted by his pilgrimage and had need of repose.

Two men appeared at the same time in front of the principal

gate of the Louvre, the one on a magnificent barb, the other on an Andalusian covered with perspiration.

They halted before the gate and exchanged looks, for, having come from opposite directions, they met at this point.

"M. de Chicot," cried the younger of the two, with a polite salutation, "how do you feel this morning?"

"What! it is Seigneur de Bussy. Wonderfully well, thank you, monsieur," answered Chicot with an ease and courtesy that betrayed the gentleman to quite as great a degree as the salutation of Bussy betrayed the great nobleman and the elegant courtier.

"You come for the levee of the King, do you not, monsieur?" inquired Bussy.

"And you also, I presume?"

"No. I come to pay my respects to Monseigneur le Duc d'Anjou. You are aware, M. de Chicot," added Bussy, with a smile, "that I have not the honor of being among his Majesty's favorites."

"The reproach is for the King and not for you, monsieur!" Bussy bowed.

"Have you come from a distance?" inquired Bussy. "I was told you were travelling."

"Yes, monsieur, I was hunting," answered Chicot. "But, by the way, have you not been travelling, too?"

"Yes, I have been making a tour in the provinces. And now, monsieur," continued Bussy, "would you be kind enough to do me a favor?"

"Certainly, I shall feel infinitely honored if I have it in my power to render any service to M. de Bussy," said Chicot.

"Well, then, as you are a privileged person, and can enter the Louvre, while I must remain in the antechamber, will you oblige me by informing the Duc d'Anjou that I am waiting for him?"

"M. le Duc d'Anjou is in the Louvre and will doubtless be present at the King's levee; why not enter along with me, monsieur?"

"I am afraid his Majesty would not view my appearance with pleasure."

"Pshaw!"

"Faith, he has not, so far, accustomed me to his gracious smiles."

"You may rest assured that, from this time forward, all that is going to change."

"Aha! are you a sorcerer, M. de Chicot?"

"Sometimes. Courage, M. de Bussy, come with me."

Bussy yielded, and they entered together, the one going to the apartments of the Duc d'Anjou, who, as we think we have already stated, lodged in the suite that had once belonged to Queen Marguerite, the other to the chamber of the King.

Henri III. was awake and had rung; a throng of valets and friends had hurried into the royal chamber; the chicken broth, spiced wine, and meat pies had been already served, when Chicot appeared in his august majesty's presence, with as frisky a gait as ever, and, without saying by your leave, began eating from the King's dish and drinking from the golden goblet.

"*Par le mordieu!*" cried the enraptured monarch, pretending to be in a great rage, "if it is n't that rascal Chicot! a fugitive, a vagabond, a miscreant!"

"I say! I say, my good son! what ails you?" said Chicot, sitting down unceremoniously in his dusty boots; "so we are forgetting our forced march from Poland, when we played the part of the stag, with all the magnates shouting: 'Yoicks! tally-ho!' at our tail" —

"Well, well," said Henri, "so my torment has returned, to be a thorn in my side as usual, and I had such peace for the last three weeks!"

"Bah!" retorted Chicot, "you are always complaining; devil take me but you are as bad as your subjects, who, at least, have some reason for it. And now, Harry mine, what have you been doing in my absence? Have we been governing our fair realm of France in our usual comical way?"

"M. Chicot!"

"Do our people still make faces at us?"

"You rascal!"

"Have we hanged any of these little curled darlings? Ah! I beg your pardon, M. de Quélus, I did not see you."

"Chicot, we 're going to have a quarrel."

"And, above all, my son, is there any money still left in our coffers or in those of the Jews? I hope there is; *ventre de biche!* life is such a bore we must have some diversion!"

And thereupon he made away with the last meat pie on the silver-gilt dish.

The King burst out laughing, his usual way of ending their disputes.

"Come, now," said he, "tell me what you have been doing during your long absence?"

"I have," answered Chicot, "been concocting the plot of a little procession in three acts:

"*First Act.* — Penitents, in shirt and breeches only, wind along from the Louvre up to Montmartre, abusing one another like pickpockets all the time.

"*Second Act.* — Same penitents, stripped to the waist and flogging one another with rosaries that have their beads sharpened to a point, descend from Montmartre to the Abbey of St. Geneviève.

"*Third Act.* — Same penitents, entirely naked, beat one another black and blue, tear one another's hides with cat-o'-nine-tails, scourges, etc., on their return from the Abbey of St. Geneviève to the Louvre.

"I had thought at first of having them all pass through the Place de Grève, where the executioner would have burned every mother's son of them — it would have been a thrilling and unexpected catastrophe; but then I thought again: the Lord has still a little sulphur of Sodom and a little pitch of Gomorrha up yonder, and I do not wish to deprive him of the pleasure of grilling them himself. And so, gentlemen, while waiting for that great day, let us have as much fun as we can in the meantime."

"Yes, but all that does not tell me what had become of you," said the King. "Do you know I had every brothel in Paris searched for you?"

"Then you rummaged the Louvre thoroughly?"

"Next, I feared some of your highwaymen friends had got hold of you."

"That could not be, Henri, it is you that have got hold of all the highwaymen; they are here."

"Then I was mistaken?"

"Egad! yes, as you always are about everything."

"Perhaps you'll tell us you were doing penance for your sins."

"You have it at last. I stayed awhile in a convent to find out what it felt like. Faith, I made some surprising discoveries, and I'm through with the monks."

Just then M. de Monsoreau entered and saluted the King with the deepest respect.

"Ah! it is you, M. le Grand Veneur," said Henri; "when are we going to have some good hunting?"

"Whenever your Majesty pleases. I have just been told that boars are numerous in Saint-Germain-en-Laye."

"He is a parlous beast, your boar," said Chicot. "King Charles IX., if my memory fail me not, had a very narrow escape from a boar when he was hunting. And then, the spears are hard and raise blisters on our little hands; do they not, my son?"

M. de Monsoreau looked askance at Chicot.

"Hold!" said the Gascon to Henri, "your grand huntsman must have met a wolf not so very long ago."

"Why so?"

"Because like the Clouds in the play of Aristophanes, he has taken the form of one, in the eye especially; 't is startling."

M. de Monsoreau grew pale, and, turning around:

"M. Chicot," said he, "I have but a limited knowledge of buffoons, having seldom frequented the court, and I warn you that I do not propose to tolerate your jeers in presence of my King, particularly when they relate to my office."

"Oh, indeed, monsieur!" said Chicot. "How different you are from us courtiers! Why, we are still laughing at the last piece of buffoonery."

"And what may this piece of buffoonery be?" asked Monsoreau.

"Making you grand huntsman; you see, then, that this dear Harry of mine, though inferior to me as a buffoon, is far a greater fool than I am."

The glance Monsoreau flashed at the Gascon was terrible.

"Come, come," said Henri, who dreaded a quarrel, "let us talk of something else, gentlemen."

"Yes," returned Chicot, "let us speak of the merits of Our Lady of Chartres."

"Chicot, no impiety," said the King, severely.

"I impious, I?" said Chicot. "I leave impiety to the men of the church; I am a man of war. On the contrary, I was going to show you it is you who have acted impiously."

"How?"

"By not uniting the two chemises, instead of separating them. If I were in your place, Henri, I should have brought

them together, and then there would have been some chance of a miracle."

This rather coarse allusion to the separation of the King and Queen occasioned a fit of merriment among the King's friends, in which Henri himself joined after a time.

"For once the fool is right enough," said he.

And he changed the conversation.

"Monsieur," said Monsoreau, in a low voice to Chicot, "may I ask you to wait for me in the recess of that window, acting as if nothing was the matter?"

"Why, of course, monsieur!" answered Chicot, "with the greatest pleasure."

"Well, then, let us draw our" —

"Let us draw anywhere you like, monsieur, in some lonely spot in a wood, if that suit you."

"No more jests, if you please; they are useless, for there is no one here to laugh at them," said Monsoreau, coming up to Chicot, who had gone before him to the window. "Now that we are alone, we must have an understanding, Monsieur Chicot, Monsieur the Fool, Monsieur the Buffoon. A gentleman — try and understand the meaning of that word — a gentleman forbids you to laugh at him; he also requests you to reflect seriously before you make any arrangements for meetings in woods; for in the woods to which you have just invited me there grow plenty of cudgels and other such things; so you see it would be very easy to complete M. de Mayenne's work by giving you another thrashing."

"Ah!" returned Chicot, apparently unmoved, although there was a sombre gleam in his dark eyes. "You remind me of all I owe M. de Mayenne; so you would wish me to become your debtor as I am his, to write you down on the same sheet in my memory, and reserve for you an equal share in my gratitude?"

"It would seem, monsieur, that among your creditors you forget the chief one."

"That surprises me, monsieur, for I am rather proud of my memory. Will you allow me to ask you who is this creditor?"

"Maître Nicolas David."

"Oh, I assure you you are wrong," answered Chicot, with a sinister laugh, "I owe him nothing, he is paid in full."

At this moment, a third gentleman came to take part in the conversation.

It was Bussy.

"Ah! M. de Bussy," said Chicot, "give me a little help, if you please. M. de Monsoreau, as you see, has tracked me; he would hunt me as if I were nothing more or less than a stag or roebuck. Tell him he is entirely in error, M. de Bussy; tell him he has to do with a boar, and that the boar sometimes turns on the hunter."

"M. de Chicot," said Bussy, "I believe you are not doing justice to M. de Monsoreau in thinking that he does not credit you to be what you are, namely, a gentleman of good family. Monsieur," continued Bussy, addressing the count, "I have the honor to inform you that M. le Duc d'Anjou desires to speak with you."

"With me?" inquired Monsoreau, uneasily.

"With you, monsieur," said Bussy.

Monsoreau looked intently at him as if he would sound the very depths of his soul, but the serene smile and steady eyes of Bussy baffled his penetration.

"Do you accompany me, monsieur?" asked Monsoreau.

"No, monsieur, I go before you, while you are taking leave of the King, to apprise his highness that you are about to obey his orders."

And Bussy returned as he came, gliding with his usual address through the throng of courtiers.

The Duc d'Anjou was in his study, reading for the second time the letter with which our readers are already acquainted. Hearing the rustling of the hangings, he thought it was Monsoreau who was entering, and hid the letter.

Bussy appeared.

"Well?" said the duke.

"Well, monseigneur, he is coming."

"Does he suspect anything?"

"And what if he did? what though he were on his guard?" answered Bussy. "Is he not your creature? Have you not raised him from obscurity? Can you not plunge him back into the obscurity from which you have raised him?"

"I suppose so," said the duke, with that absent-minded air which always distinguished him at the approach of events calling for the display of some energy.

"Do you think him less guilty to-day than you thought him yesterday?"

"No, a hundred times more; his crimes are of the class that grow larger the more you reflect upon them."

"Besides," said Bussy, "everything centres in this one point: he has treacherously carried off a young girl of noble birth and has forced her to marry him, using means that were fraudulent and utterly unworthy of a gentleman for the purpose; either he must ask for the dissolution of this marriage himself, or you must do it for him."

"That is my determination."

"And in the name of the father, in the name of the young girl, in the name of Diane, I have your word?"

"You have."

"Remember that they are aware of your interview with this man, and how anxiously they await its result."

"The young girl shall be free, Bussy; I pledge you my word."

"Ah!" cried Bussy, "if you do that, you will be really a great prince, monseigneur."

He took the duke's hand, that hand that had signed so many false promises, the hand of that man who had broken so many sworn oaths, and kissed it respectfully.

At this moment steps were heard in the vestibule.

"He is here," said Bussy.

"Show M. de Monsoreau in," said François, in a tone whose severity was of good omen to Bussy.

At last the young gentleman was almost certain of achieving the object of all his desires, and, as he bowed to Monsoreau, he could not hinder a slight expression of haughty irony from coming into his eyes; on the other hand, the grand huntsman received the salutation of Bussy with that glassy look behind which, as behind an impassable rampart, were intrenched the sentiments of his soul.

Bussy took his place in the corridor with which we are already acquainted, the same corridor in which La Mole was very nearly being strangled one night by Charles XI., Henri III., the Duc d'Alençon, and the Duc de Guise, with the cordelier's cord of the queen mother. This corridor, as well as the adjoining landing, was at present packed with gentlemen who had come to pay their court to the Duc d'Anjou.

When Bussy appeared every one hastened to make way for him, as much from esteem for his personal qualities as on account of the favor he enjoyed with the prince. He himself

kept a tight hand over all his feelings, and never for a moment did he disclose a symptom of the terrible anguish that was concentrated in his breast while he awaited the result of a conference upon which all his happiness was staked.

The conversation could not fail to be animated; Bussy had seen enough of Monsoreau to understand that he would not let himself be ruined without a struggle. But, for all that, the Duc d'Anjou had but to press a hand on him, and if he refused to bend, well! he must break.

Suddenly the well-known echo of the prince's voice was heard. The voice was the voice of command.

Bussy started with joy.

"Ah!" said he, "the duke is keeping his word."

But to this echo there succeeded another. A profound silence reigned among the courtiers, who exchanged anxious glances.

Uneasy and nervous, borne along, now by the tide of hope, driven back again by the ebb of fear, Bussy reckoned every minute of the time that elapsed for nearly a quarter of an hour.

Then the door of the duke's chamber was suddenly opened, and through the hangings were heard voices apparently speaking in a cheerful conversational tone.

Bussy knew the duke was alone with the grand huntsman, and, if their conversation had followed its opening course, it should be anything but pleasant at the present moment.

This evidence of reconciliation made him shudder.

Soon the voices came nearer, the hangings were raised. Monsoreau bowed himself out, walking backward. The duke followed him to the door, saying:

"Adieu, my friend, the thing is settled."

"My friend!" murmured Bussy, "God's blood! what does this mean?"

"So, monseigneur," said Monsoreau, his face still turned to the prince, "it is your highness's firm opinion that the best way out of the difficulty is publicity?"

"Yes, yes," answered the duke; "these mysteries are all nonsense."

"Then this evening," said the grand huntsman, "I will present her to the King."

"Do not fear to do so, I will have everything arranged."

The duke leaned forward and whispered some words in the grand huntsman's ear.

"Very well, monseigneur," answered the latter.

Monsoreau made his last bow to the prince, who glanced round at the gentlemen present, but did not see Bussy, hidden as he was by the folds of a curtain which he had clutched at to save himself from falling.

"Gentlemen," said Monsoreau, turning to the courtiers, who were waiting for an audience and were already inclined to hail the rise of a new favorite apparently destined to throw Bussy into the shade, "gentlemen, allow me to announce to you a piece of news. Monseigneur permits me to make public my marriage with Mademoiselle Diane de Méridor, my wife for over a month, and to present her at court this evening under his auspices."

Bussy staggered; although the blow was not entirely unexpected, it was so violent that he felt utterly crushed.

Then he advanced, and he and the duke, both pale, but for very different reasons, exchanged glances of contempt on Bussy's part, of terror on the part of the Duc d'Anjou.

Monsoreau forced his way through the throng of gentlemen; amid all sorts of compliments and congratulations.

As for Bussy, he made a movement as if to approach the prince, who saw it, dropped the hangings, and shut the door behind them; the key could then be heard turning in the lock.

Bussy felt the blood surging, warm and tumultuous, to his temples and to his heart. His hand coming in contact with the dagger in his belt, he half drew it from its sheath, for, with this man, the first outburst of passion was almost irresistible. But the love which had driven him to this violence paralyzed all his fiery energies; a sorrow, bitter, profound, piercing, stifled his rage; instead of expanding his heart, it broke it.

Before this paroxysm of two contending passions, the young man's energy sank, as sink two angry billows that seem to wish to scale the heavens when they dash together at the strongest point of their ascension.

Feeling that if he remained a moment longer he should betray before every one the violence of his despair, Bussy moved through the corridor, reached the private staircase, descended through a postern into the courtyard of the Louvre, leaped on his horse, and galloped to the Rue Saint-Antoine.

The baron and Diane were eagerly waiting for the answer

promised by Bussy; they saw the young man enter, pale, trembling, with bloodshot eyes.

"Madame," cried Bussy, "hate me, despise me; I believed I was something in this world, and I am but an atom; I believed I could do something, and I cannot even tear out my heart. Madame, you are indeed the wife of M. de Monsoreau, his recognized wife, and are to be presented this evening. But I am a poor fool, a wretched madman, or rather, ah! yes, the Duc d'Anjou is, as you said, M. le Baron, a coward and a scoundrel."

And leaving the father and the daughter overcome with dismay, Bussy, wild with grief, drunk with rage, rushed downstairs, leaped on his steed, plunged the rowels deep in its sides, and, unknowing where he went, dropping the reins, all his care to repress the wild pulsations of his heart, throbbing under his nerveless hand, he rode onward, scattering terror and desolation on his pathway.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHAT PASSED BETWEEN THE DUC D'ANJOU AND THE GRAND HUNTSMAN.

It is time to explain the sudden change wrought in the Duc d'Anjou's attitude toward Bussy.

When the duke received M. de Monsoreau, in compliance with the urgent entreaty of his gentleman, he was resolute in his determination to aid in achieving the latter's purpose. His bile was easily stirred up, and gushed, on small provocation, from a heart ulcerated by two dominant passions: wounded self-love and the exposure threatened by Bussy in the name of the Baron de Méridor had made François fairly foam with rage.

The outburst produced by the combination of two such sentiments is, in fact, appalling, when the heart that contains them is so solidly sheathed, so hermetically closed, that, as in the case of bombs crammed with gunpowder, the pressure doubles the intensity of the explosion.

The prince, then, received the grand huntsman with one of

those austere looks that made the boldest of the courtiers tremble, for well they knew what means he had ready at hand to execute his vengeance.

"Your highness sent for me?" said Monsoreau, with an air of great calmness, his eyes fixed on the tapestry. Accustomed as he was to work upon the prince's soul, he knew what a fire smouldered under this seeming coldness, and he gazed at the hangings as if he were asking an explanation of their owner's intentions from these inanimate objects rather than from the owner himself.

"Do not be afraid, monsieur," said the duke, who divined his suspicions, "there is no one behind these hangings; we can talk freely and, best of all, frankly."

Monsoreau bowed.

"You are a good servant, M. le Grand Veneur, and devoted to my person, are you not?"

"I believe so, monseigneur."

"And I am sure of it; you have often warned me of the plots concocted against me and have aided me in my enterprises, forgetful of your own interests and at the risk of your own life."

"Your highness" —

"Oh, I am well aware of the fact. Even lately — I must really remind you of the services you have rendered me, for such is the delicacy of your nature that you never, even indirectly, allude to them — even in that late unhappy adventure" —

"What adventure, monsiegneur?"

"The abduction of Mademoiselle de Méridor — poor young lady!"

"Alas!" murmured Monsoreau, but in a tone that left it in doubt whether he gave to the words of François their implied meaning.

"You pity her, do you not?" said the prince, pointedly.

"Does your highness not pity her?"

"I? Ah, you know how deeply I have regretted that fatal caprice! Nay, nothing but the friendship I feel for you, nothing but the recollection of your loyal service, could make me forget that, but for you, I should never have carried off that young girl."

The stroke told. "I wonder," thought Monsoreau, "is this simply remorse."

"Monseigneur," he said aloud, "the natural goodness of your disposition leads you to exaggerate the matter; you had no more to do with this young girl's death than I had" —

"How can you show that?"

"Surely it was not your intention to offer violence to Mademoiselle de Méridor?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then the intention absolves you, monseigneur; it was merely one of those unfortunate accidents we see occurring every day."

"And besides," said the duke, eyeing him intently, "death has buried everything in eternal silence!"

There was something in the tone of the prince's voice that forced Monsoreau to raise his eyes. "This," he said to himself, "cannot be remorse." Then:

"Monseigneur," he answered, "shall I speak frankly to you?"

"Why should you hesitate to do so?" said the prince, with a mixture of astonishment and hauteur.

"Really, I see no reason why I should."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, monseigneur, I mean that, henceforth, frankness ought to be the principal element in this conversation, considering that I am speaking to a prince noted for his intelligence and magnanimity."

"Henceforth? What does this signify?"

"It signifies that your highness has not thought proper, so far, to use that frankness toward me."

"Upon my word!" answered the duke, with a burst of laughter that betrayed his furious anger.

"Hear me," said Monsoreau, humbly, "I know what your highness intended to say to me."

"Speak, then."

"Your highness intended to say that perhaps Mademoiselle de Méridor was not dead and that those who believed themselves her murderers had no reason to feel remorse."

"Oh, monsieur, what a time it has taken you to impart this soothing consolation to me. You are a faithful servant, there can be no doubt about it! You saw me gloomy and dispirited; I told you of the dismal dreams I have had ever since this woman's death, although, Heaven knows, I am not a very sensitive person, and yet you let me live thus, when even a

doubt might have spared me so much suffering. What am I to call such conduct as that, monsieur?"

The intensity with which the duke uttered these words proved that his fury could not be restrained much longer.

"Monseigneur," replied Monsoreau, "it looks as if your highness were bringing a charge against me."

"Traitor!" cried the duke, abruptly, making a step toward the grand huntsman, "I bring it and I'll prove it. You have deceived me! You have taken from me the woman I loved!"

Monsoreau turned frightfully pale, but remained as calm and proud as ever.

"It is true," said he.

"Ah! it is true! — the scoundrel! the knave!"

"Have the goodness to speak lower, monseigneur," said Monsoreau, with the same coolness. "Your highness seems to forget that you are speaking to a gentleman, as well as to a good servant."

The duke laughed convulsively.

"A good servant of the King," continued Monsoreau, still unmoved.

The duke was startled by the last words.

"What do you mean?" he muttered.

"I mean," returned Monsoreau, with obsequious gentleness, "that should your highness deign to listen to me I might be able to convince you that, since you wanted to take this woman, there was no reason why I should not take her also."

The duke was so astounded at the grand huntsman's audacity that, for the moment, he was unable to utter a word.

"My excuse is," continued Monsoreau, "that I loved Mademoiselle de Méridor ardently."

"But I, too, loved her!" answered François, with dignity.

"Of course, monseigneur, you are my master; but Mademoiselle de Méridor did not love you?"

"And she loved you? — you?"

"Perhaps," murmured Monsoreau.

"You lie! you lie! You used force as I did; only I, the master, failed, while you, the lackey, succeeded. I could, indeed, employ power, but you could employ treachery."

"Monseigneur, I loved her."

"What is that to me?"

"Monseigneur" —

"What! threats, serpent?"

"Monseigneur, take care!" said Monsoreau, lowering his head, like a tiger about to spring. "I loved her, I tell you, and I am not one of your lackeys, as you have just said. My wife is mine as much as my lands are mine; no one can take her from me, not even the King. I wished to have this woman and I took her."

"Indeed!" exclaimed François, springing toward a silver bell on the table; "you took her, did you? Well, you shall give her up!"

"You are mistaken, monseigneur," said Monsoreau, hurrying to the table to prevent the prince from ringing. "Banish from your mind the evil thought of injuring me that has just entered it, for, if you once called, if you once offered me a public insult" —

"You shall give up this woman, I tell you."

"Give her up! how? She is my wife before God."

Monsoreau expected this declaration to be effective, but it did not mollify the duke's anger in the least.

"If she is your wife before God, you shall give her up before men!" said he.

"Does he know anything, I wonder?" murmured Monsoreau, unguardedly.

"Yes, I know everything. You shall break this marriage. I will break it, though you were bound by it before all the Gods that ever reigned in Heaven."

"Ah! monseigneur, you are blaspheming," said Monsoreau.

"To-morrow Mademoiselle de Méridor shall be restored to her father; to-morrow you shall be on your way to the exile to which I condemn you, and in an hour you shall have sold your post as grand huntsman. These are my orders; refuse to obey them, vassal, and I break you as I break this glass."

And the prince, seizing an enamelled crystal goblet, a present from the Archduke of Austria, hurled it furiously at Monsoreau, who was covered with its fragments.

"I will not give up my wife, I will not resign my office, and I will remain in France," retorted Monsoreau, marching up to the amazed François.

"Why not — wretch?"

"Because I will ask the King of France to pardon me — the King elected in the Abbey of St. Geneviève, and because this new sovereign, so gracious and noble, so favored by God,

and that, too, so recently, will not refuse to listen to the first suppliant who sues him for a boon."

The words of Monsoreau became more emphatic as he went on, until the fire in his eyes seemed to pass into his voice, rendering the terrible import of his language more terrible still.

François turned pale, took a step backward, and drew the heavy hangings over the door closer together; then, grasping Monsoreau's hand, he said, jerking out his words, as if the strain had been too much for him:

"Enough — not another word of that, count. This boon — ask it — but speak lower — I am listening."

"I will speak humbly," answered Monsoreau, all his coolness at once restored, "as becomes your highness's most humble servant."

François walked slowly round the vast apartment, and every time he came near the tapestries he looked behind them. Apparently, he could scarcely believe that Monsoreau's words had not been heard.

"You were saying?" he asked.

"I was saying, monseigneur, that a fatal love was the cause of all. Love, monseigneur, is the most imperious of passions. I could never have forgotten that your highness had cast eyes on Diane, had I been master of myself."

"I told you, count, it was a treacherous thing to do."

"Do not overwhelm me, monseigneur, and listen to the idea that came into my mind. I saw you rich, young, and happy, the first prince in the Christian world."

The duke started.

"For such you are," whispered Monsoreau in the duke's ear; "between you and the throne there is but a shadow, a shadow easily banished. I saw all the splendor of your future, and, comparing your magnificent fortune with my paltry aspirations, dazzled by the effulgent brightness that was some day to shine around you and almost hide from your eyes the poor little flower I coveted, — I so insignificant beside my illustrious master, — I said to myself: 'Leave to the prince his brilliant dreams, his glorious projects; there is his goal; mine must be sought in obscurity. He will hardly miss the tiny pearl I steal from his royal crown.'"

"Count! Count!" said the duke, intoxicated, in spite of himself, by the charms of this magic picture.

"You pardon me, do you not, monseigneur?"

At this moment the prince raised his eyes and they met Bussy's portrait, framed in gilt leather, on the wall. He liked to look at it sometimes, just as he had of yore liked to look on the portrait of La Mole. There was such a haughty expression in the look, such loftiness in the mien, and the hand rested on the hip in an attitude of such superb grace that the duke almost fancied it was Bussy himself with his flashing eyes — Bussy ready to step forth from the wall and bid him have courage.

"No," said he, "I cannot pardon you. If I am obdurate, God is my witness that it is not on account of myself; it is because a father in mourning — a father shamefully deceived — cries out for his daughter; it is because a woman, forced to marry you, invokes vengeance on your head; it is, in a word, because the first duty of a prince is justice."

"Monseigneur!"

"Yes, I tell you, the first duty of a prince is justice, and I must do justice!"

"If justice be the first duty of a prince," said Monsoreau, "gratitude is the first duty of a king."

"What is that you say?"

"I say a king ought never to forget the man to whom he owes his crown — now, monseigneur" —

"Well?"

"You owe me your crown, sire!"

"Monsoreau!" cried the duke, more terrified now than ever when the grand huntsman first uttered his warning menace. "Monsoreau!" he repeated, in a low and trembling voice, "are you a traitor to the king as you were to the prince?"

"I am loyal to him who is loyal to me, sire," answered Monsoreau in tones that grew louder and louder.

"Wretch!"

And the duke again looked at the portrait of Bussy.

"I cannot!" said he. "You are a loyal gentleman, Monsoreau; you must understand I cannot approve of what you have done."

"Why so, monseigneur?"

"Because it was an act unworthy of you and of me — renounce this woman — ah! my dear count, another sacrifice — rest assured that, to reward you for it, there is nothing you can ask which I will not grant."

"Then your highness is still in love with Diane de Méridor?" asked Monsoreau, livid with jealousy.

"No! No! I swear I am not!"

"Then who is it has attempted to influence your highness? She is my wife; am I not a well-born gentleman? Can any one have dared to interfere in my private affairs?"

"But she does not love you."

"What affair is that of any one?"

"Do this for my sake, Monsoreau."

"I cannot."

"Then" — said the duke, in a state of the most horrible perplexity — "then" —

"Reflect, *sire*."

The prince wiped off from his forehead the perspiration brought there by the title the count had just uttered.

"You would denounce me?"

"To the King you dethroned? Yes, your Majesty; for if my new sovereign injured me in my honor or happiness, I would go back to the old one."

"It is infamous!"

"It is true, sire; but I am enough in love to descend to infamy even."

"It is base!"

"Yes, your majesty; but I am enough in love to descend to baseness."

The duke made a movement toward Monsoreau. But the latter, with a single look, a single smile, brought him to a standstill.

"You would gain nothing by killing me, monseigneur," he said, "there are certain secrets which float above the corpse! Let us remain as we are, you the most clement of kings, I the humblest of your subjects!"

The duke clasped his hands and tore them with his fingernails.

"Come, come, my gracious lord, do something for the man who has served you so well in everything."

François rose.

"What do you want?" said he.

"I want your majesty to" —

"Oh! wretched man! must I then entreat you not to" —

"Oh! monseigneur!"

And Monsoreau bowed.

"Speak," murmured François.

"You pardon me, monseigneur?"

"Yes."

"You will reconcile me with M. de Méridor, monseigneur?"

"Yes."

"You will sign my marriage contract with Mademoiselle de Méridor, monseigneur?"

"Yes," answered the duke, in a stifled voice.

"And you will honor my wife with a smile on the day when she appears formally in the circle of the Queen, to whom I wish to have the honor of presenting her?"

"Yes," said François; "is that all?"

"Yes, monseigneur, absolutely all."

"Go; you have my word."

"And you," said Monsoreau, approaching the duke's ear, "shall keep the throne to which I have raised you. Adieu, sire."

This time his words were so low that they sounded pleasantly in the prince's ears.

"And now," thought Monsoreau, "to discover how the duke has found it out."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW THE CHANCELLOR UNVEILED A CONSPIRACY.

That same evening, M. de Monsoreau secured one of the objects for the achievement of which he had insisted on the Duc d'Anjou's intervention: he presented his wife in the Queen's circle and in that of the queen mother also.

Henri, tired out as usual, had gone to bed, after being informed by M. de Morvilliers that he must hold a council the next morning.

Henri did not even ask the chancellor why such a council should assemble; his Majesty was too sleepy. The hour was afterward fixed on which would be least likely to disturb the slumbers and repose of the sovereign.

This magistrate knew his master perfectly, and was fully aware that, unlike Philip of Macedon, his King would pay but slight attention to his communications if he had to listen to them when dozing or fasting.

He also knew that Henri was subject to insomnia — it is the lot of those who have to watch over the sleep of others not to sleep themselves — and would be sure, sometime in the middle of the night, to remember the audience asked for; he would, therefore, grant it under the spur of a curiosity proportioned to the situation.

Everything passed as M. de Morvilliers had foreseen.

Henri woke after sleeping three or four hours; recalling to mind the chancellor's request, he sat up and began to think. But thinking alone he found rather tedious; he slipped out of bed, put on his silk drawers and slippers, and making no further change in his night costume, — which gave him the appearance of a spectre, — he made his way by the light of his lamp — never extinguished since the night when the voice of the Eternal rang in his ears through the air-cane of Madame de Saint-Luc — to Chicot's bedroom. Now the jester's bedroom was at present the one in which Mademoiselle de Brissac had so happily celebrated her wedding-night.

The Gascon was sleeping soundly and snoring like a forge.

Henri pulled him three times by the arm without awaking him.

But, after the third time, the King shouted so loud that Chicot opened an eye.

"Chicot!" repeated the King.

"What is the matter now?" asked the Gascon.

"Ah! my friend, can you sleep thus when your King finds sleep impossible?"

"Good heavens!" cried Chicot, pretending not to recognize the King, "is it possible, then, that his Majesty has a fit of indigestion?"

"Chicot, my friend," said Henri, "it is I!"

"You; who?"

"I, Henri."

"Decidedly, my son, the pheasants disagreed with you; I warned you at supper, but you would eat so much of them, as well as of that crawfish soup."

"No," answered Henri, "I hardly tasted either."

"Then some one has poisoned you. *Ventre de biche!* how pale you look, Henri!"

"It is my mask, my friend," said the King.

"You are not sick, then?"

"No."

"Then why do you wake me?"

"Because I am terribly worried."

"You are worried, are you?"

"Yes, greatly."

"So much the better."

"Why so much the better?"

"Because trouble brings reflection, and you will reflect that you have no right to wake an honest man at two in the morning except you are going to make him a present. What have you for me? Show me."

"Nothing, Chicot. I have come to talk with you."

"That is not enough."

"Chicot, M. de Morvilliers came to court last night."

"You receive very bad company, Henri. What did he come for?"

"To ask me for an audience."

"Ah! there is a man who has some little breeding; he is not like you, Henri, coming into people's bedrooms at two in the morning without as much as saying by your leave."

"But what could he have to say to me, Chicot?"

"What! was it to ask that you woke me up?"

"Chicot, my friend, you know that M. de Morvilliers has something to do with my police."

"No, faith, I knew nothing about it."

"Chicot, I find that M. de Morvilliers is always remarkably well informed."

"And to think," cried the Gascon, "that I might now be asleep, instead of listening to such nonsense."

"Have you any doubt as to the chancellor's watchfulness?" asked the King.

"Yes, *corbœuf*, I have, and I have my reasons for it, too."

"What are they?"

"If I give you one, will that be enough?"

"Yes, if it is a good one."

"And you will leave me in peace afterward?"

"Certainly."

"Well, one day — no, it was one evening" —

"That does not matter."

"On the contrary, it matters a great deal — Well, one evening I beat you in the Rue Fromentel; Quélus and Schomberg were with you."

"You beat me?"

"Yes, cudgelled you; cudgelled you all three."

"And why?"

"You had insulted my page. You received the blows, then, and M. de Morvilliers never said a word about them."

"What!" cried Henri, "it was you, you scoundrel! you sacrilegious wretch!"

"Myself and none other," said Chicot, rubbing his hands. "Don't you think, my son, I hit pretty hard when I set about it?"

"Scoundrel!"

"You acknowledge then that what I say is true?"

"I will have you whipped, Chicot."

"That is not the question. All I ask you is to say whether it is true or not."

"You know well it is true, you rascal!"

"And did you send for M. de Morvilliers the next day?"

"Yes, you were present when he came."

"And you told him of the grievous accident that had happened to one of your friends?"

"Yes."

"And you ordered him to find the criminal?"

"Yes."

"Did he find him for you?"

"No."

"Well, go to bed, Henri; you see your police is n't worth much."

And turning to the wall, refusing to answer a single word, Chicot was soon snoring again with a loudness that resembled the booming of cannon. The King gave up in despair all hope of rousing him from his second sleep.

Henri returned to his room, sighing on the way, and having no one to converse with but his greyhound Narcisse, he bewailed to the latter the misfortune of kings who can never learn the truth except at their own expense.

The next day the council assembled. The composition of this council varied with the changing friendships of the King. The members this time were Quélus, Maugiron, D'Épernon, and Schomberg, these four having been the favorites for over six months.

Chicot, seated at the head of the table, was cutting out paper boats and arranging them in line; he wanted, he said,

to create a fleet for his Most Christian Majesty fully equal to that of his Most Catholic Majesty.

M. de Morvilliers was announced.

The statesman had assumed his most sombre garb and his most lugubrious air for the occasion. After a profound salutation, which was returned by Chicot, he approached the King.

"I am," said he, "in presence of your Majesty's council?"

"Yes, in presence of my best friends. Speak."

"Then, sire, I take courage, and I have need of all my courage, for I have a terrible plot to denounce to your Majesty."

"A plot!" cried all.

Chicot pricked up his ears and suspended the construction of a splendid two-masted galiot which he intended making the flagship of his fleet.

"Yes, your Majesty, a plot," said M. de Morvilliers, in the mysterious, half-suppressed tones that forebode a terrible revelation.

"Oh!" cried the King, "a Spanish plot, is it?"

At this moment the Duc d'Anjou entered the hall, the doors of which were immediately closed.

"Have you heard, brother?" cried Henri. "M. de Morvilliers has just informed us of a plot against the safety of the state."

The duke's eyes moved slowly round the hall with that piercing, suspicious look we know so well.

"Is it really possible," he murmured.

"Alas! yes, monseigneur," said M. de Morvilliers, "a most dangerous plot."

"Tell us all about it," replied Chicot, putting his completed galiot in the crystal basin on the table.

"Yes," stammered the Duc d'Anjou, "tell us all about it, M. le Chancelier."

"I am listening," said Henri.

The chancellor spoke in his most guarded tone, assuming his humblest attitude, showing in his eyes the importance he attached to his information.

"Sire," said he, "I have had some malcontents under surveillance for a long time" —

"Oh! only some?" interrupted Chicot. "Why, you are quite modest, M. de Morvilliers!"

"They were," continued the chancellor, "people of no im-

portance: shopkeepers, mechanics, or junior law-clerks — with here and there a few monks and students."

"Certainly such fellows as those are not very great princes," said Chicot, with the greatest unconcern, setting to work on a new vessel.

The Duc d'Anjou tried to force a smile.

"You will see, sire," said the chancellor. "I know that malcontents always find their opportunities in war or religion."

"A very judicious remark," observed the King. "Continue."

The chancellor, delighted at the royal approbation, went on:

"In the army I had officers devoted to your Majesty who informed me of everything; in religion the affair was more difficult; so with regard to the latter I set some of my men on the watch."

"Very judicious, indeed!" said Chicot.

"In short," continued Morvilliers, "through my agents I persuaded a man connected with the provostship of Paris" —

"To do what?" inquired the King.

"To keep the preachers who excite the people against your Majesty under his eyes."

"Oho!" thought Chicot, "I wonder is my friend known?"

"These people received their inspiration, sire, not from God, but from a party hostile to your Majesty, and this party I have studied."

"Very good," said the King.

"Very judicious," said Chicot.

"And I know their purposes," added Morvilliers, triumphantly.

"Splendid!" cried Chicot.

The King made a sign to the Gascon to be silent.

The Duc d'Anjou never took his eyes off the speaker.

"For more than two months," said the chancellor, "I have had in my pay men of much skill, of tried courage, and also, it must be said, insatiable cupidity; but I have been careful to turn that to the profit of the King, since, though I pay them magnificently, a great deal more is gained than lost. I have just learned that for a good round sum of money I shall be able to learn the chief rendezvous of the conspirators."

"That will be really nice," said Chicot; "pay it, my King, pay it!"

"Oh, there will be no difficulty about the payment," cried

Henri ; "but, to come to the main point, chancellor, what is the object of the plot, and what do the conspirators hope for ?"

"Sire, they are thinking of nothing less than of a second Saint-Barthélemy."

"Against whom ?"

"Against the Huguenots."

All the members of the council looked at one another in amazement.

"And about how much did that cost you ?" asked Chicot.

"Seventy-five thousand livres in one direction, and a hundred thousand in the other."

Chicot turned to the King.

"If you like," said he, "I 'll tell you M. de Morvilliers' secret for a thousand crowns."

The chancellor made a gesture of surprise ; the Duc d'Anjou bore up better than might have been expected.

"Tell it to me," answered the King.

"It is simply the League which was begun ten years ago," said Chicot. "M. de Morvilliers has discovered what every Parisian knows as well as the Lord's Prayer" —

"Monsieur," interrupted the chancellor.

"I am saying the truth — and will prove it," cried Chicot, in a very lawyer-like tone.

"Tell me, then, the place where the Leaguers meet."

"With great pleasure : firstly, the public squares ; secondly, the public squares ; thirdly, the public squares."

"M. Chicot likes to make a joke," said the chancellor, with a grimace ; "and now will he tell us their rallying sign ?"

"They dress like Parisians, and stir their legs when they walk," answered Chicot, gravely.

A burst of laughter received this explanation, in which M. de Morvilliers believed it would be in good taste to join, so he laughed with the others. But he soon became serious and solemn again.

"There is one meeting, however," said he, "which a spy of mine witnessed, and it was held in a place of which M. Chicot is ignorant."

The Duc d'Anjou turned pale.

"Where ?" said the King.

"In the Abbey of Sainte Geneviève."

Chicot dropped a paper hen which he was about putting aboard the flagship.

"The Abbey of Sainte Geneviève!" exclaimed the King.

"It is impossible," murmured the duke.

"It is true," said Morvilliers, well satisfied at the effect produced, and looking triumphantly round the assembly.

"And what did they do, M. le Chancelier? What decision did they come to?" asked the King.

"That the Leaguers should choose their leaders, that every one enrolled should arm, that every province should receive an envoy from the rebellious capital, and that all the Huguenots, so dear to his Majesty, — these were their expressions," —

The King smiled.

"— should be massacred on a given day."

"Is that all?" inquired Henri.

"Odsfish!" said Chicot, "it 's easy seeing you are a Catholic, Henri."

"Is that really all?" said the duke.

"Hang it! it can't be all," cried Chicot. "If that 's all we 're to have for our one hundred and seventy-five thousand livres, the King is robbed."

"Speak, chancellor," said the King.

"There are leaders" —

Chicot could see how fast the duke's heart must be beating from the rising and sinking of the part of his doublet over it.

"Ah, indeed!" said the Gascon, "a conspiracy with leaders! How wonderful! Still I can't help thinking we ought to have something more than that for our one hundred and seventy-five thousand livres."

"But their names?" asked the King. "How are these leaders called?"

"First, a preacher, a fanatic, a madman, whose name I got for ten thousand livres."

"And you did well."

"Brother Gorenflot, a monk of Sainte Geneviève."

"Poor devil!" murmured Chicot, with genuine pity. "It was fated that this adventure should not turn out well for him!"

"Gorenflot!" said the King, writing down the name. "And who is the next?"

"Next" — said the chancellor, hesitatingly; "yes, sire — that is all." And Morvilliers cast an inquisitorial and enigmatical look over the assembly, as much as to say:

"If your Majesty and I were alone, you would hear a good deal more."

"Speak," said the King; "there are none but friends here, speak."

"Oh, sire, he whom I hesitate to name has also powerful friends."

"Are they close to me?"

"They are everywhere, sire."

"Are they more powerful than I?" cried Henri, pale with rage and anxiety.

"Sire, a secret is not spoken aloud in public. Excuse me, but I am a statesman."

"You are right."

"And very judicious!" said Chicot; "but, for that matter, we are all statesmen."

"Monsieur," said the Duc d'Anjou, "we beg to present our most humble respects to the King and withdraw, if your communication cannot be made in our presence."

M. Morvilliers hesitated. Chicot watched his slightest gesture, fearing that, artless as the chancellor seemed, he had succeeded in discovering something less commonplace than the matters mentioned in his first revelations.

The King made a sign to the chancellor to come close to him, to the Duc d'Anjou to remain in his place, to Chicot to keep still. and to the others to try to avoid hearing the chancellor's report,

M. de Morvilliers bent over the King to whisper in his ear, but had succeeded in making only half the movement required by the rules of etiquette in such cases, when a great clamor was heard in the court-yard of the Louvre. The King sprang to his feet, Quélus and D'Épernon hurried to the window, and the Duc d'Anjou grasped the hilt of his sword, as if these threatening shouts were directed against him.

Chicot, rising up to his full length, was able to see into the yard, and called out:

"Why, it is M. de Guise entering the Louvre!"

The King gave a start.

"It is true," said the gentlemen.

"The Duc de Guise!" stammered M. d'Anjou.

"This is very odd, is it not, very odd that M. de Guise should be in Paris?" slowly observed the King, who had just read in the almost stupefied eyes of Morvilliers the name the latter desired to whisper in his ear.

"Had the communication you were about to make to me anything to do with my cousin Guise?" he asked the chancellor in a low tone.

"Yes, sire," said the magistrate, in the same tone. "It was he who presided at the meeting."

"And the others?"

"I do not know the others."

Henri consulted Chicot by a glance.

"*Ventre de biche!*" cried the Gascon, taking a regal attitude, "show my cousin of Guise in!"

And, leaning toward Henri, he whispered:

"You need not write his name on your tablets; there is no danger of your forgetting it."

The ushers noisily opened the doors.

"Only a single folding-door, gentlemen," said Henri; "only one! The two are for the King."

The Duc de Guise was near enough to hear these words; but they made no change in the smile with which he had determined to greet the King.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHAT M. DE GUISE CAME TO DO IN THE LOUVRE.

Behind M. de Guise entered a great number of officers, courtiers, and gentlemen, and behind this brilliant escort was the people, an escort not so brilliant, but more reliable, and, certainly, more formidable.

But the gentlemen entered the palace and the people stayed at the gates.

It was from the ranks of the people that the cries arose a second time, when the duke was lost to their gaze on going into the gallery.

At sight of the kind of army that followed the Parisian hero every time he appeared in the streets, the guards had seized their arms, and, drawn up behind their brave colonel, hurled at the people menacing looks, at the people's triumphant leader a mute defiance.

Guise had noticed the attitude of the soldiers commanded by Crillon; he made a gracious little salutation to their com-

mander; but, sword in hand and standing four paces in front of his men, the colonel never abandoned his stiff, impassive attitude of disdainful inattention.

This revolt of a single man and a single regiment against his power, now so generally established, affected the duke strongly. His brow became for a moment clouded, but cleared as he drew near the King, so that, as we have seen, he entered Henri's cabinet with a smile on his lips.

"Ah! it is you, cousin," said the King. "What an uproar you bring in your train! Was there not a flourish of trumpets? I thought I heard them."

"Sire," answered the duke, "the trumpets sound in Paris only for the King, in campaigns only for the general, and I am too familiar with both courts and camps to make any mistake with reference to this matter. Here the trumpets would make too much noise for a subject; on the field of battle they would not make enough for a prince."

Henri bit his lips.

"*Par la mordieu!*" said he, after a silence, during which he eyed the Lorraine hero intently, "you are very splendidly garbed, cousin. Was it only to-day you arrived from the siege of La Charité?"

"Only to-day, sire," answered the duke, with a slight blush.

"By my faith, your visit does us much honor, cousin; much honor, much honor, indeed!"

Henri III. repeated his words when he had too many ideas to conceal, just as the ranks of soldiers are thickened before a battery not to be unmasked until a fixed moment.

"Much honor," repeated Chicot, in a tone that would lead any one to believe that these last two words had also been spoken by the King.

"Sire," said the duke, "your Majesty is no doubt jesting. How can my visit be an honor to him who is the source of all honor?"

"I mean, M. de Guise," replied Henri, "that every good Catholic, on returning from a campaign, is accustomed to visit God first in one of his temples; the King comes after God. Serve God, honor the King, is, you know, cousin, an axiom half religious, half political."

The heightened color on the duke's face now grew more distinct, and the King, who had, so far, kept his eyes riveted on

him, and so had remarked his change of color, happening to turn round, perceived with astonishment that his good brother was as pale as his fair cousin was red.

He was struck by the different effect produced by the emotion by which each was evidently excited, but he affected to turn away his eyes and assumed an air of great affability, the velvet glove under which nobody could hide his royal claws better than Henri.

"In any case, duke," said he, "nothing can equal my joy in seeing that you have escaped all the risks of war, although you sought danger, I have been told, in the rashest manner. But danger knows you, cousin, and avoids you."

The duke acknowledged the compliment by a bow.

"So, cousin, I must really entreat you not to be so eager for deadly perils, for, in truth, you put to shame idlers like us who simply eat and sleep, and hunt, and find our only triumphs in the invention of new fashions and new prayers."

"Yes, sire," said the duke, fastening on the last word. "We know you are an enlightened and pious prince, and that no pleasure can make you lose sight of the glory of God and the interests of the Church. And this is the reason why we approach your Majesty with such confidence."

"The confidence of your cousin in you must be evident, Henri," said Chicot, pointing to the gentlemen who remained just outside the room through respect; "see, he has left a third of his followers at the door of your cabinet, and the other two-thirds at the doors of the Louvre."

"With confidence?" repeated Henri. "Do you not always come to me with confidence, cousin?"

"Sire, that is a matter of course; but the confidence of which I speak refers to the proposition I am about to make to you."

"Ah, you have a proposition to make to me, cousin! Then you may speak with all the confidence to which you alluded. What is your proposition?"

"The execution of one of the finest ideas that ever moved the Christian world since the Crusades became impossible."

"Speak, duke."

"Sire," continued the duke, now raising his voice so as to be heard in the ante-chamber, "the title of Most Christian King is not a vain one; it exacts from him who bears it an ardent zeal for the defence of religion. The eldest son of the Church —

and that, sire, is your title — must always be ready to defend his mother."

"Ha!" said Chicot, "this cousin of mine who preaches with a rapier by his side, and helm on head, is rather droll! I am no longer astonished that the monks want to make war. Henri, I insist that you give a regiment to Brother Gorenflot!"

The duke feigned not to hear; Henri crossed his legs, rested his elbow on his knee and his chin on his hand.

"Is the Church threatened by the Saracens, my dear duke?" he asked, "or can it be that you aspire to be king — of Jerusalem?"

"Sire," returned the duke, "the great throng of people who followed me, blessing my name, honored me with this reception solely, I assure you, for the purpose of rewarding my ardent zeal in defending the faith. I have already had the honor of speaking to your Majesty, before your accession to the throne, of a plan for an alliance between all true Catholics."

"Yes, yes," said Chicot, "I remember the League; by Saint Bartholomew, I do. The League, my sovereign, — *ventre de biche*, — my son, you must be awfully forgetful not to remember that triumphant idea."

The duke turned round at these words and glanced disdainfully at the speaker, quite unaware of their effect on the King's mind since the recent revelations of M. de Morvilliers.

The Duc d'Anjou was alarmed by them, and, laying a finger on his lips, he gazed fixedly on the Duc de Guise, pale and motionless as a statue of Prudence.

This time Henri did not see the signs of an understanding that showed the two princes had interests in common; but Chicot, approaching his ear under pretence of fixing one of his two paper hens between the little chains of rubies in his cap, whispered:

"Look at your brother, Henri."

Henri raised his eyes quickly; the finger of the prince was lowered almost as quickly, but it was too late. Henri had seen the gesture and guessed its meaning.

"Sire," continued the Duc de Guise, who had noticed Chicot's action, but could not hear his words, "the Catholics have, indeed, called their association the holy League, and its prin-

cipal object is to strengthen the throne against the Huguenots, the mortal enemies of that throne."

"Well spoken," cried Chicot. "I approve *pedibus et nutu*."

"But," the duke went on, "to form an association is of little importance, no matter how compact the body may be, except it be directed in the course it should take. Now, in a kingdom like France, several millions of men cannot assemble without the consent of the king."

"Several millions of men!" cried Henri, making no effort to suppress his astonishment, which, in fact, might reasonably be interpreted as terror as well as amazement.

"Several millions of men," repeated Chicot. "Oh, it is but a small seed of discontent; but if planted by skilful hands — as I have no doubt it shall be — likely to produce quite a pretty crop."

The duke's patience was at length exhausted; he tightened his scornful lips, and, pressing his foot firmly on the floor, upon which he did not dare to stamp, he said:

"I am astonished, sire, that your Majesty should allow me to be interrupted when I am speaking to you of such serious matters."

Chicot, who pretended to feel all the justice of the duke's indignation, cast furious glances around him on every side, and, imitating the squeaking voice of the usher of the Parliament:

"Silence, I say!" cried he, "or, *ventre de biche!* you'll have a bone to pick with me!"

"Several millions of men!" said the King, who had considerable difficulty in swallowing these figures; "it is very flattering for the Catholic religion; and how many Protestants are there in my kingdom who oppose this association of so many millions?"

The duke seemed to be calculating.

"Four," said Chicot.

This fresh sally produced a burst of laughter among the King's friends, while the Duc de Guise frowned, and the gentlemen in the ante-chamber murmured loudly at the Gascon's audacity.

The King turned slowly toward the door from whence these murmurs proceeded, and as Henri, when he liked, could assume a look of great dignity, the murmurs ceased.

Then, fixing the same look on the duke, he said:

"Let us see, monsieur, what you wish; to the point, to the point!"

"I ask, sire, — for the popularity of my sovereign is, perhaps, even dearer to me than my own, — I ask that your Majesty show you are as superior to us in your zeal for the Catholic religion as you are in everything else, and so deprive the discontented of every pretext for renewing the wars."

"Oh, if it is a question of war, cousin," said Henri, "I have troops. In fact, you have some twenty-five thousand of them under your orders in the camp which you have just quitted with the object of aiding me with your excellent advice."

"Sire," said the duke, "when I speak of war I ought, perhaps, to explain myself."

"Explain yourself, cousin; you are a great captain, and it will give me, I assure you, great pleasure to hear you discourse on such subjects."

"Sire, I meant that, at the present time, kings have to sustain two wars, a moral war, if I may so express myself, and a political war; a war against ideas and a war against men."

"*Mordieu!*" cried Chicot, "what a powerful exposition!"

"Silence, fool!" said the King.

"Men," continued the duke, "men are visible, palpable, mortal. You can meet, attack, conquer them; and, when you have conquered them, you can have them tried and hanged; or, better still" —

"— you can hang them without trying them," said Chicot; "it is shorter and more kinglike."

"But ideas," the duke went on, "cannot be met in the same way, sire. They glide unseen and penetrate; they hide, especially from the eyes of those who wish to destroy them; concealed in the depths of souls, they there throw out deep roots; the more you cut off the branches that imprudently appear, the more potent and indestructible become the roots below. An idea, sire, is a young giant which must be watched night and day; for the idea that crept yesterday at your feet may tomorrow tower above your head. An idea, sire, is like a spark falling upon straw; there is need of good eyes to discover the beginning of the conflagration, and that, sire, is the reason why millions of watchers are needed."

"And therefore my four French Huguenots must be sent promptly to the devil!" cried Chicot; "*ventre de biche!* I pity them!"

"And it is in order to provide for and direct those watchers that I propose to your Majesty that you appoint a chief for this holy Union."

"Have you spoken, cousin?" asked Henri of the duke.

"Yes, sire, and without ambiguity, as your Majesty must have perceived."

Chicot heaved a tremendous sigh, while the Duc d'Anjou, recovered from his first alarm, smiled on the Lorraine prince.

"Well!" said the King to those around him, "what do you think of the matter, gentlemen?"

Chicot made no answer; he took off his hat and gloves, and, seizing a lion's skin by the tail, he dragged it into a corner of the apartment and lay down on it.

"What 's that you are doing, Chicot?" inquired the King.

"Sire," said Chicot, "it is claimed that night brings good counsel. Why is this said to be so? because during night we sleep. I am going to sleep, sire, and to-morrow, when my brain is quite rested, I will give an answer to my cousin of Guise."

And he stretched his legs out over the animal's claws.

The duke hurled a furious look at the Gascon, to which the latter, opening one eye, replied with a snore that resembled the rumbling of thunder.

"Well, sire," asked the duke, "what is your Majesty's opinion?"

"My opinion is that you are quite right, as you always are, cousin. Assemble, then, your principal Leaguers, come to me at their head, and I will choose the man who ought to be their chief in the interests of religion."

"And when am I to come, sire?" inquired the duke.

"To-morrow."

While the King uttered the last word he skilfully divided his smile. The Duc de Guise had the first part of it, the Duc d'Anjou the second.

The latter was about to retire with the rest of the court; but, at the first step he took toward the door, Henri said:

"Stay, brother, I want to speak with you."

The Duc de Guise pressed his forehead for an instant with his hand, as if he would thereby thrust back a whole world of thoughts, and then set out with his suite, who quickly disappeared under the vaults of the gallery.

A few minutes after, were heard the shouts of the multitude,

cheering him on leaving the Louvre as they had cheered him on entering it.

Chicot still snored, but we should not venture to say that he slept.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CASTOR AND POLLUX.

The King, while retaining his brother, had dismissed his favorites.

The Duc d'Anjou who, during the whole preceding scene, had been successful enough in assuming an air of indifference, except in the eyes of Chicot and M. de Guise, accepted Henri's invitation without distrust. He had no suspicion of the glance the King had, at the Gascon's instigation, darted at him, and which had caught his indiscreet finger too near his lips.

"Brother," said Henri, after making sure that every one except Chicot had left, and marching with great strides from the door to the window, "do you know that I am a very happy prince?"

"Sire," said the duke, "if your Majesty be really happy, your happiness is but the reward which Heaven owes you on account of your merits."

Henri gazed on his brother.

"Yes, very happy," he continued, "for, when great ideas do not come to myself, they come to those who surround me. Now, the idea which has just entered the head of my cousin of Guise is a very great idea indeed!"

Chicot opened one eye, as if he did not hear so well with both eyes closed and as if he should understand the King's words better when he saw his face.

The duke bowed in sign of assent.

"In fact," went on Henri, "to unite all Catholics under one banner, to turn our kingdom into a church, and, without apparently intending to do so, to arm all France, from Calais to Languedoc, from Bretagne to Burgundy, so as to have an army always ready to march against England, Flanders, or Spain, without ever giving the slightest cause of suspicion to England, Flanders, or Spain, is, you must admit, François. a magnificent idea!"

"Is it not, sire?" said the Duc d'Anjou, delighted to see that his brother shared the views of his own ally, the Duc de Guise.

"Yes, and I confess I have the strongest feeling that the author of such a fine project should be amply rewarded."

Chicot opened both his eyes, but only to shut them again; he had detected on the King's face one of those imperceptible smiles, visible to him alone, for he knew his Henri better than any one, and this smile made him feel quite easy in his mind.

"Yes," continued Henri, "I repeat it, such a project deserves to be rewarded, and I am resolved to do everything in my power for its originator. But is the Duc de Guise, François, truly the father of this fine idea, or rather, of this fine work? for the work has begun, has it not, brother?"

The duke indicated by a sign that, in fact, the plan was already in operation.

"Better and better," returned the King. "I said I was a very happy prince; I ought to have said too happy, François, since not only do these ideas come to my neighbors, but, in the eagerness to be useful to their King and relative, they proceed at once to put them into execution. But I have already asked you, my dear François," said Henri, placing his hand on his brother's shoulder, "I have already asked you is it to the Duc de Guise that I am really indebted for a thought worthy of a king."

"No, sire; Cardinal de Lorraine had the same idea twenty years ago, and the massacre of Saint Bartholomew alone prevented its execution, or rather rendered its execution needless at the time."

"Ah! how unfortunate it is that the cardinal is dead!" said Henri, "I should have had him elected Pope on the death of his Holiness Gregory XIII.; but," continued Henri, with that wonderful seeming frankness which made him the first comedian in his kingdom, "after all, his nephew has inherited his idea and has made it bear abundant fruit. Unfortunately, however, I cannot make him Pope, but I will make him — What can I make him, François that he is not already?"

"Sire," said François, completely deceived by his brother's words, "you exaggerate your cousin's merits; he has only inherited the idea, as I have already told you, and he has been powerfully aided in turning this idea to account."

"By his brother the cardinal?"

"Doubtless he has had something to do with cultivating it, but I do not mean him."

"Ah! the Duc de Mayenne?"

"Oh, sire! you do him far too much honor."

"You are right. How could any statesmanlike idea enter the head of such a butcher. But to whom am I to show my gratitude for the help given my cousin of Guise, François?"

"To me, sire," answered the duke.

"To you!" exclaimed Henri, as if his astonishment were excessive.

Chicot again opened an eye.

The duke bowed.

"What!" said Henri, "when I saw every one let loose against me, the preachers against my vices, the poets and lampooners against my follies, the politicians against my faults, while my friends mocked at my impotence and my situation became so intolerable that I peaked and pined, had new white hairs in my head every day, such an idea came to you, François, to you whom I must confess (ah! how weak is man and how blind are kings!) I have not always regarded as my friend! Ah, François, how guilty I have been!"

And Henri, moved even to tears, held out his hand to his brother.

Chicot again opened both eyes.

"Oh!" continued Henri, "was there ever such a glorious idea! I was not able to levy taxes or levy troops without raising an outcry; I was not able to walk or sleep or make love without exciting ridicule, and lo! this idea of M. de Guise, or rather, of yourself, brother, gives me at once an army, money, friends and tranquillity. Now, in order that this tranquillity be permanent, one thing is necessary."

"What is it?"

"My cousin spoke just now of giving a chief to this great movement."

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"Of course, François, you see clearly that this chief cannot be one of my favorites; none of them has at once the brains and courage befitting so lofty a position. Quélus is brave; but the rascal is taken up entirely with his amours. Maugiron is brave; but the coxcomb thinks only of his toilet. Schomberg is brave; but even his best friends must acknowledge that he is anything but clever. D'Épernon is brave; but

he is, admittedly, a hypocrite; I cannot trust him for a moment, although I show him a fair face. But you know, François," said Henri, more unreservedly than ever, "that one of the heaviest burdens of a king is the necessity of constant dissimulation; and so when I can speak openly from my heart, as I am doing now, ah! I breathe."

Chicot closed both his eyes.

"Well, then," continued Henri, "if my cousin of Guise has originated the idea in the development of which you have had such an important share, François, he certainly has a right to the office of putting it into execution."

"What is this you are saying, sire?" cried François, trembling with anxiety.

"I say that the director of such a movement should be a great prince."

"Sire, be on your guard!"

"A good captain and an able negotiator."

"An able negotiator, especially," repeated the duke.

"Well, François, do you not think that, from every point of view, M. de Guise is admirably fitted for the post? Come, now, your opinion?"

"Brother," answered François, "M. de Guise is already very powerful."

"Certainly, but his power is of such a character that it really constitutes my strength."

"The Duc de Guise holds the army and the populace; the Cardinal de Lorraine holds the Church; Mayenne is an instrument in the hands of his two brothers; you would, certainly, concentrate an immense amount of power in a single house if you did what you say."

"True," said Henri; "I have already thought of that, François."

"If the Guises were French princes I could understand it; it would be their interest to increase the power of the house of France."

"No doubt, while, on the contrary, they are Lorraine princes."

"A house which has ever been the rival of ours."

"Ha! François, you have just touched the sore. *Tudieu!* I did not believe you were so good a politician — well, yes, you see it now; you know now why I have grown so thin, why my hair is white. The cause of this is the elevation of

the house of Lorraine to a place of rivalry with ours; for, look you, François, a single day does not pass that these three Guises — you spoke truly, the three hold everything — there passes not a day that the duke, or the cardinal, or Mayenne — one or the other of them, at any rate — does not by audacity, or adroitness, or force, or craft, rob me of some fragment of my power, some particle of my prerogatives, while I am too poor, weak, and isolated a creature to be able to make head against them. Ah! François, if we could have had this explanation earlier, if I could have read in your heart what I read now, most assuredly, having your support, I should have offered a firmer resistance than I have done; but it is too late now, as you must see yourself."

"Why so?"

"Because there would be a struggle, and, in truth, every struggle wearies me to death; I must, therefore, name him chief of the League."

"You will be wrong, brother."

"But whom would you have me name, François? Who would accept this perilous post, for perilous it is? Do you not see what was the meaning of the duke's words? Do you not see he intended I should name him?"

"Well?"

"Well! why, any man I should name in his stead he would regard as an enemy!"

"Name some man so powerful that his strength, supported by yours, will be a match for the power and strength of all the Lorraines together."

"Ah! my good brother," said Henri in a tone of utter discouragement, "I do not know a single person who unites the qualities you mention."

"Look around you, sire."

"Around me? Why, the only true friends I see are you and Chicot, brother."

"Oho!" murmured Chicot, "would he be likely to play a trick on me?"

And he shut both his eyes.

"Well, brother," said the duke, "you do not understand."

Henri gazed at his brother as if a veil had just dropped from his eyes.

"What?" he cried.

François made a sign with his head.

"But no," said Henri; "you would never consent, François! The work would be too rough; you would surely never undertake the task of exercising all these worthy citizens; you would never give yourself the trouble of going through all the sermons of their preachers; and, in case there was a fight, you would never transform yourself into a butcher and turn the streets of Paris into slaughter-pens. To do so, you should have to be triform like M. de Guise, and have a right arm named Charles, and a left arm called Louis. Now, the duke proved himself quite a master-hand at killing during the day of Saint Bartholomew; don't you think so, François?"

"Far too good a master-hand, sire!"

"Yes, perhaps. But you do not answer my question, François. What! you would like the sort of trade to which I have just alluded! You would rub up against the cracked breast-plates of these cockneys and the old stewpans they substitute for helmets? What! you would become a hero of the populace, you, the chief lord of our court? *Mort-de-ma-vie!* brother, what changes age does bring with it!"

"I would not, perhaps, do so for my own sake, sire; but I would certainly do it for yours."

"Good brother, excellent brother," said Henri, wiping away with the tip of his finger a tear that had never existed.

"Then," said François, "you would not be displeased if I undertook the task you were thinking of entrusting to M. de Guise?"

"Displeased?" exclaimed Henri. "*Corne du diable!* so far from being displeased, I should be delighted, on the contrary. So you, too, had been thinking of the League? So much the better, *mordieux!* so much the better. So you, too, had caught hold of the small end of the idea; what nonsense I am talking when I say the small end? — the big end. What you have told me is, I give you my word, really marvellous. In good sooth, I am surrounded by superior intellects, and I am myself the greatest ass in my realm."

"Oh, your Majesty jests."

"Jests? God forbid! the situation is too serious. I say what I think, François. You really relieve me from a very embarrassing position, the more embarrassing, François, because I am ill and my mind is not as strong as it was. Miron has shown me this often. But let us return to something more important; and, besides, what use is my mind to me,

when I can light my path by the brilliancy of yours? It is agreed, then, that I shall name you chief of the League, is it not?"

François started with joy.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "if your Majesty believed me worthy of such confidence!"

"Confidence! ah, François, confidence! As long as M. de Guise is not that chief, whom can I distrust? The League? Have I, perchance, any danger to fear from the League? Speak, my dear François, tell me everything."

"Oh! sire," protested the duke.

"What a fool I am!" rejoined Henri. "In such a case, my brother would not be its chief; or, better still, from the moment he became its chief, all danger would vanish. Eh? that is sound logic, now, is it not? Clearly, my old pedagogue gave me something, at least, in return for my money. No, by my faith, I have no distrust. Besides, there are a goodly number of stout warriors in France who would be sure to draw the sword against the League whenever the League refused to give me free elbow-room."

"True, sire," answered the duke, with an artless frankness that was almost as cleverly assumed as his brother's, but not quite; "the King is still the King."

Chicot opened an eye.

"Indeed!" said Henri. "But unfortunately an idea has also come into my head. It is incredible how many ideas are sprouting to-day; there are days, however, of that sort."

"What idea, brother?" inquired the duke, uneasily, for he could hardly believe that such good fortune could fall on his head without meeting some obstacle on the way.

"Oh, our cousin of Guise, the father, or rather, the putative father, of the invention, has probably gone away with the notion that he is to be the chief. He is sure to want to be the commander."

"The commander, sire?"

"Without doubt, without even the slightest doubt. He has probably cherished the idea solely because it would be profitable to him. It is true that you, too, have cherished it. But take care, François; he is not the man to stand being the victim of the *Sic vos non vobis* — you know your Virgil — *nidificatis, aves.*"

"Oh! sire."

"François, I should be willing to wager the thought has occurred to him. He knows I am so giddy."

"Oh, the moment you make known your will, he will yield."

"Or pretend to yield. I have said already, 'Take care, François.' He has a long arm, has my cousin of Guise. I will say even more; I will say he has long arms, and that not a man in the kingdom except him, not even the King, can stretch his arms so far as to touch with one hand the Spains and with the other England: Don Juan of Austria and Elizabeth. Bourbon's sword was not as long as my cousin of Guise's arm, and yet he did much harm to our grandfather, François I."

"But," answered François, "if your Majesty consider him so dangerous, the stronger the reason why you should give me the command of the League. He will thus be caught between my power and yours, and then you can easily have him tried after the first treasonable enterprise."

Chicot opened the other eye.

"Have him tried, François, have him tried? An easy thing for Louis XI., who was rich and powerful, to have men tried and erect scaffolds for them. But I have not money enough even to purchase all the black velvet I should need."

While saying these words, Henri, who, in spite of his self-control, had grown excited, flashed a piercing glance at the duke, which compelled him to lower his eyes.

Chicot closed both his.

There was a moment's silence between the two princes.

The King was the first to break it.

"You must be very prudent, my dear François, in everything," said he; "no civil wars, no quarrels between my subjects. Though I am the son of Henri the Contentious, I am also the son of Catharine the Crafty, and I have inherited a little of the astuteness of my mother. I will recall the Duc de Guise and make him so many promises that everything shall be arranged amicably."

"Sire," cried the Duc d'Anjou, "you grant me the command, do you not?"

"Certainly."

"And you wish me to have it?"

"It is my fondest wish. But we must not give too much umbrage to my cousin of Guise in this matter."

"Then your Majesty may make your mind easy," said the

Duc d'Anjou; "if this be the only obstacle you see to my nomination, I can arrange the matter with the duke."

"But when?"

"Immediately."

"Are you going in search of him? going to visit him? Oh, brother! just think of it, will not that be doing him too much honor?"

"No, sire, I am not going in search of him."

"How is that?"

"He is waiting for me."

"Where?"

"In my apartments."

"In your apartments? Why, I heard the cheers that hailed him as he left the Louvre!"

"Yes; but, after leaving the grand gate, he returned by the postern. The King had a right to the Duc de Guise's first visit; I had a right to the second."

"Ah, brother," said Henri, "how grateful I am to you for thus supporting our prerogatives, which I am sometimes weak enough to abandon! Go, then, François, and try to come to an understanding with him."

The duke took his brother's hand and bowed to kiss it.

"What are you doing, François?" cried Henri; "to my arms, on my heart, there is your true place!"

And the two brothers embraced several times; then, after a last one, the Duc d'Anjou, restored to liberty, passed out of the cabinet, crossed the galleries rapidly, and ran to his apartments.

His heart, like that of the first mariner, must have been encased in oak and steel not to have burst with joy.

As soon as his brother was gone, the King gnashed his teeth in his rage, and, darting through the secret corridor which led to the chamber of Marguerite of Navarre, now the Duc d'Anjou's, he reached a hiding-place where he could easily hear the conversation about to take place between the two dukes, just as Dionysius from his hiding-place could hear the conversation of his prisoners.

"*Ventre de biche!*" said Chicot, now opening both eyes at once, "but family scenes are touching! For a moment I thought I was in Olympus and witnessing the meeting of Castor and Pollux after their six months' separation."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHICH PROVES THAT LISTENING IS THE BEST WAY OF HEARING.

The Duc d'Anjou was now with his guest, the Duc de Guise, in that chamber of the Queen of Navarre where formerly the Béarnais and De Mouy had discussed their plans of escape in a low voice, with mouth glued to ear. The provident Henri knew there were few apartments in the Louvre which had not been so constructed that words, even spoken in a whisper, could be heard by such as desired to hear them. The Duc d'Anjou was by no means ignorant of this important fact; but he had been so completely beguiled by his open-hearted brother that he either forgot it now or else did not consider the matter of much moment.

Henri III., as we have stated, entered his observatory just at the moment when the Duc d'Anjou entered his apartment, so that none of the speakers' words could escape his ears.

"Well, monseigneur?" quickly asked the Duc de Guise.

"Well, monsieur, the council has separated," answered the duke.

"You were very pale, monseigneur."

"Visibly?" asked the prince, anxiously.

"To me, yes, monseigneur."

"Did the King notice anything?"

"No, at least so I believe. So his Majesty detained your highness?"

"As you saw, duke."

"Doubtless to speak of the proposal I had just laid before him?"

"Yes, monsieur."

There was a moment of rather embarrassing silence; its meaning was well understood by Henri, who was so placed that he could not miss a word of the conversation.

"And what did his Majesty say, monseigneur?" asked the Duc de Guise.

"The King approves the idea; but its very immensity leads him to believe that such a man as you at the head of such an organization would be dangerous."

"Then we are likely to fail."

"I am afraid we are, my dear duke, and the League seems to me out of the question."

"The devil!" muttered the duke, "it would be death before birth, ending before beginning."

"The one has as much wit as the other," said a low, sarcastic voice, the words ringing in Henri's ear, as he leaned close to the wall.

Henri turned round quickly, and saw the tall body of Chicot listening at one hole, just as he was listening at another.

"So you followed me, rascal," cried the King.

"Hush!" said Chicot, making a gesture with his hand; "hush, my son, you hinder me from hearing."

The King shrugged his shoulders, but as Chicot was, on the whole, the only being in whom he placed entire confidence, he went back to his occupation of listening.

The Duc de Guise was speaking again.

"Monseigneur," said he, "I think, in that case, the King would have refused immediately. His reception of me was so harsh that surely he would have ventured to be plain about the matter. Does he desire to oust me from the office of chief?"

"I believe so," answered the prince, hesitatingly.

"Then he wants to ruin the enterprise?"

"Assuredly," said the Duc d'Anjou; "though as you began the movement, I felt it my duty to give you every aid I could, and I have done so."

"In what way, monseigneur?"

"In a way that has partially succeeded: the King has left it in my power to either kill or revive the League."

"In what manner?" asked the Lorraine prince, whose eyes flashed in spite of himself.

"Listen. Of course, you understand the plan would have to be submitted to the principal leaders. What if, instead of expelling you and dissolving the League, he named a chief favorable to the enterprise? What if, instead of raising the Duc de Guise to that post, he substituted the Duc d'Anjou?"

"Ah!" cried the duke, who could not suppress the exclamation or prevent the blood from mounting to his face.

"Good!" said Chicot, "the two bulldogs are going to fight over their bone."

But to the great surprise of the Gascon, and especially of the King, who was not so well informed on this matter as his

jester, the duke's amazement and irritation suddenly vanished, and, in a calm and almost joyful tone, he said: .

"You are an able politician, monseigneur, if you have done that."

"I have done it," answered the duke.

"And very speedily!"

"Yes; but I ought to tell you that circumstances aided me and I turned them to account; nevertheless, my dear duke," added the prince, "nothing is settled, and I would not conclude anything before seeing you."

"Why so, monseigneur?"

"Because I do not yet know what this is going to lead us to."

"I do, and well, too," said Chicot.

"Quite a nice little plot," murmured Henri, with a smile.

"And about which M. de Morvilliers, whom you fancy to be so well informed, never said a word to you. But let us listen; this is growing quite interesting."

"Then I will tell you, monseigneur, not what it is going to lead us to, for God alone knows that, but how it can serve us," returned the Duc de Guise; "the League is a second army; now, as I hold the first one, as my brother holds the Church, nothing can resist us, if we remain united."

"Without reckoning that I am heir presumptive to the crown."

"Aha!" muttered Henri.

"He is right," said Chicot; "your fault, my son; you always keep the two chemises of our Lady of Chartres separated."

"But, monseigneur, though you are heir presumptive to the crown, you must take into account certain bad chances."

"Duke, do you believe I have not done so already, and that I have not weighed them a hundred times?"

"There is first the King of Navarre."

"Oh, that fellow does not trouble me at all; he is too busy making love to La Fosseuse."

"That fellow, monseigneur, will dispute with you your very purse-strings. He is lean, famished, out-at-elbows; he resembles those gutter cats that, after merely smelling a mouse, will pass whole nights on the sill of a garret window, while your fat, furry, pampered cat cannot draw its claws because of their heaviness from their velvet sheaths. The King of Navarre has his eyes on you; he is constantly on the watch, and

never loses sight either of you or your brother; he is hungry for your throne. Wait until some accident happen to him who is now seated on it; you will then see what elastic muscles your famished cat has; you will see whether he will jump with a single bound from Pau to Paris and fasten his claws in your flesh; you will see, monseigneur, you will see."

"Some accident to him who is now seated on the throne," repeated François slowly, fixing his eyes inquiringly on the Duc de Guise.

"Ha! ha!" murmured Chicot, "listen, Henri. This Guise is saying, or, rather, on the point of saying, things that ought to teach you something, and I should advise you to turn them to your advantage."

"Yes, monseigneur," continued the Duc de Guise, "an accident! Accidents are not rare in your family, a fact you know as well as I do, and, perhaps, better. This prince is in good health, and suddenly he falls into a lethargy; that other is counting on long years, and he has but a few hours to live."

"Do you hear Henri? Do you understand?" said Chicot, taking the King's hand, which was trembling and covered with a cold perspiration.

"Yes, it is true," answered the Duc d'Anjou, in a voice so dull that, to hear it, the King and Chicot were forced to pay double attention, "it is true; the princes of my house are born under a fatal star. My brother, Henri III., is, thank God! sound and healthy. He endured formerly the fatigues of war, and now his life is a series of recreations, recreations he supports as he formerly supported the fatigues of war."

"Yes, monseigneur; but remember this one thing," returned the duke: "the recreations to which French kings are addicted are not always without danger. How, for instance, did your father, Henri II., die, who had happily escaped all the risks of war to meet his fate in one of those recreations of which you have spoken? The lance of Montgomery was used as a weapon of chivalry, intended for a breastplate and not for an eye. I am inclined to think myself that the death of King Henri II. was an accident. You will tell me that, a fortnight after this accident, the queen mother had M. de Montgomery arrested and beheaded. That is true, but the King was not the less dead. As for your brother, the late King François, — a worthy prince, though his mental weakness made the people regard him with some contempt, —

he, too, died very unfortunately. You will say, monseigneur, he died of a disease in his ears, and who the devil would look upon that as an accident? Yet it was an accident, and a very grave one. I have heard more than once, both in the city and camp, that this mortal disease had been poured into the ear of King François II. by some one whom it would be very wrong to call Chance, since he bore another well-known name."

"Duke!" murmured François, turning crimson.

"Yes, monseigneur, yes," continued the duke, "the name of king has long brought misfortune in its train. The name king might be defined by the word *insecurity*. Look at Antoine de Bourbon. It was certainly his name of king that gained him that arquebuse-wound in the shoulder, of which he died. For any one but a king the wound was by no means fatal; yet he died of it. The eye, the ear, and the shoulder have been the occasion of much sorrow in France; and, by the way, that reminds me that your friend, M. de Bussy, has made some rather nice verses on the subject."

"What verses?" asked Henri.

"Nonsense, man!" retorted Chicot; "do you mean to tell me you don't know them?"

"Yes."

"Well you are, beyond yea or nay, a true King, when it's possible to hide such things from you. I am going to repeat them; listen:

> "'By the ear and the shoulder and eye
> Three French Kings have been fated to die.
> By the shoulder, the eye, and the ear
> Three French Kings have been sent to their bier.'"

"But hush! hush! I have an idea we are going to hear something from your brother even more interesting than what we have heard already."

"But the last verse."

"You 'll have it later when M. de Bussy turns his hexastich into a decastich."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that the family picture lacks two personages. But listen, M. de Guise is about to speak; and you may be certain *he* has n't forgot the verses."

Just when Chicot had finished, the dialogue began again.

"Moreover, monseigneur," continued the duke, "the whole

history of your relatives and allies is not contained in the verses of Bussy."

"What did I tell you!" said Chicot, nudging Henri with his elbow.

"For instance, there was Jeanne d'Albret, the mother of the Béarnais, who died through the nose from smelling a pair of perfumed gloves, bought by her from a Florentine living at the Pont du Michel; a very unexpected accident, quite surprising to every one, especially as it was known there were people who had an interest in her death. You will not deny, monseigneur, that this death astonished you exceedingly?"

The duke's only answer was a contraction of the eyebrows that rendered his sinister face more sinister still.

"And then, take the accident to King Charles IX., which your highness has forgotten," said the duke; "and yet it is surely one which deserves to be remembered. It was not through eye or ear or shoulder or nose that his accident happened, it was through the mouth."

"What do you mean?" cried François.

And Henri III. heard the echo of his brother's footstep on the floor as he started back in terror.

"Yes, monseigneur, through the mouth," repeated Guise; "those hunting-books are very dangerous whose pages are glued to each other, so that, in order to turn over the leaves, you have to wet your finger with saliva every moment. There is something poisonous in the very nature of old books and when this poison mingles with the saliva, even a king cannot live forever."

"Duke! duke!" exclaimed the prince, "I believe you really take a pleasure in inventing crimes."

"Crimes, monseigneur?" asked Guise; "and pray, who is talking of crimes? I am relating accidents, that is all, accidents. I wish you to understand clearly, monseigneur, that I am dealing solely and entirely with accidents and nothing else. Was not that misfortune Charles IX. encountered while hunting also an accident?"

"Aha! Henri," said Chicot, "you are a hunter; this must have some interest for you. Listen, listen, my son, you're going to hear something curious."

"I know what it is," said Henri.

"But I don't; at that time, I had not been presented at court; don't hinder me from hearing, my son."

"You know the hunt of which I am about to speak, monseigneur?" continued the Lorraine prince. "I allude to the hunt in which, with the noble intention of killing the boar that turned on your brother, you fired in such a hurry that, instead of killing the animal at which you aimed, you wounded him at whom you did not aim. That arquebuse-shot, monseigneur, is a signal proof of the necessity of distrusting accidents. In fact, at court your skill in shooting was a matter of notoriety. Your highness had never been known before to miss your aim, and you must have been very much astonished at your failure in that instance, and very much annoyed, especially as malevolent persons propagated the report that, but for the King of Navarre, who fortunately slew the boar your highness failed to slay, his Majesty, as he had fallen from his horse, must have certainly been killed."

"But," answered the Duc d'Anjou, trying to recover the composure so sadly shaken by the ironical words of Guise, "what interest had I in my brother's death, when the successor of Charles IX. must be Henri III.?"

"One moment, monseigneur, let us understand each other — one throne was already vacant, that of Poland. The death of King Charles IX. left another, that of France. Doubtless I am aware that your eldest brother would have certainly chosen the throne of France. But the throne of Poland was not so very bad a makeshift. There are many people, I have been told, who have coveted even the poor little throne of Navarre. Moreover, the death of Charles would bring you a step nearer to royalty, and then, there was no reason why you should not profit by the next accident. King Henri III. was able to return from Warsaw in ten days; what was to hinder you from doing, in case of an accident, what King Henri had done?"

Henri III. looked at Chicot, who looked at him in turn, not with his usual expression of malice and sarcasm, but with an almost tender interest, which, however, quickly vanished from his bronzed face.

"Well, what do you conclude from all this?" asked the Duc d'Anjou, ending, or, rather, trying to end, a conversation in which the thinly veiled discontent of the Duc de Guise made itself evident.

"Monseigneur, I conclude that every king has his accident, as we were saying just now. Now, you are the inevitable accident of Henry III., especially if you are the chief of the

League, for to be chief of the League is almost to be the king of the King; not to mention that, by becoming chief of the League, you get rid of the Béarnais, that is to say, you destroy the 'accident' of your highness' coming reign."

"Coming! do you hear him?" cried Henri III.

"*Ventre de biche!* I should say I do," answered Chicot.

"Then?" — said the Duc de Guise.

"Then," repeated the Duc d'Anjou, "I will accept. You advise me to do so, do you not?"

"Advise you!" cried the Lorraine prince, "I entreat you to accept, monseigneur."

"And what will you do to-night?"

"Oh, as to that, you may be easy. My men are all ready, and to-night Paris will see some curious scenes."

"What are they going to do in Paris to-night?" asked Henri of Chicot.

"What! you can't guess?" answered the jester.

"No."

"What a donkey you are, my son! To-night the League is to be signed publicly. For a long time our good Parisians have been signing it privately; they were waiting for your sanction; you gave it this morning, and they are signing to-night, *ventre de biche!* You see, Henri, your 'accidents' — for you have now two of them — are not losing their time."

"Very well," said the Duc d'Anjou; "till to-night, then, duke."

"Yes; till to-night," said Henri.

"What! you will run the risk of parading your capital to-night, Henri?" asked Chicot.

"Undoubtedly."

"You are wrong, Henri."

"Why?"

"Look out for the accidents!"

"Do not be alarmed. I shall be well attended. You come with me."

"What do you take me for — a Huguenot? I am a good Catholic, my son, and to-night I go to sign the League, sign it ten times rather than once, — yea, a hundred times rather than ten."

The voices of the two dukes were now silent.

"One word," said Henri, detaining Chicot, as he was moving off. "What do you think of all this?"

"I think none of your royal predecessors was forewarned of his accident. Henri II. was not forewarned about his eye; Antoine de Bourbon was not forewarned about his shoulder; Jeanne d'Albret was not forewarned about her nose; Charles IX. was not forewarned about his mouth. So you see you have a great advantage over them, Master Henri, for, *ventre de biche!* you know your brother, don't you, sire?"

"Yes," said Henri, "and, *par la mordieu!* before very long he'll know me, too!"

CHAPTER XL.

HOW THE LEAGUE HAD AN EVENING PARTY.

All that distinguishes the Paris of to-day during its festivals is an uproar more or less noisy, a crowd more or less considerable, but always the same uproar and the same crowd. The Paris of olden time had a good deal more to show for itself than this. The narrow streets themselves were singularly beautiful, with their houses of many gables, balconies, and carved woodwork, while each house had a characteristic physiognomy of its own; then the crowds of people, all in a hurry and all rushing to the same point, expressing frankly their mutual admiration or contempt, hooting this one or that one who had something strange about him that separated him from his neighbors. The language, dress, arms, gesture, voice, and demeanor, formed each in itself a curious detail, and these thousand details, assembled on a single point, made up a picture of the most interesting description.

Now, this is what Paris was at eight in the evening on the day when M. de Guise, after his visit to the King and his conversation with the Duc d'Anjou, decided on having the good citizens of the capital of the realm sign the League.

A crowd of citizens dressed in their holiday apparel, or armed with their handsomest weapons, as if for a review or a battle, directed their steps to the churches. The faces of all these men, moved by the same feeling and marching to the same goal, were at once joyous and menacing, the latter especially when they passed in front of a post of the Swiss guards or the light horse. The expression of their features, and, notably, the cries, hisses, and bravados that corresponded

with it, would have alarmed M. de Morvilliers if that magistrate had not known his good Parisians thoroughly — a mocking and rather irritating race, but incapable of mischief, except drawn into it by some wicked leader or provoked to it by some imprudent enemy.

What added to the noise and confusion of the crowd, and at the same time added to the variety and picturesqueness of the scene, was the presence of large numbers of women, who, disdaining to keep house on such an important day, had either compelled or persuaded their husbands to take them with them. Some had even done better, and had brought with them their batches of children; and it was rather comical to see these brats tied, as it were, to the monstrous muskets, gigantic sabres, and terrible halberds of their fathers. In fact, in all times and ages the little vagabond of Paris has liked to trail a weapon when he could not carry it, or to admire it when he could not trail it.

From time to time, a group, more fiery than the others, drew their old swords from their scabbards; it was especially when passing before some dwelling supposed to be the abode of a Huguenot that this demonstration took place. Thereupon the children shrieked out: "Death to the Huguenots!" while the fathers shouted: "To the stake with the heretics! To the stake! To the stake!"

These cries drew to the windows the pale face of some old servant or dark-featured minister. Then our citizen, proud and happy at having frightened some one more cowardly than himself, like the hare in La Fontaine, continued his triumphal march, and carried his noisy and harmless menace in another direction.

But it was in the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, especially, that the crowd was the thickest. The street was literally packed, and the throng pressed tumultuously toward a bright light suspended below a sign, which many of our readers will recognize when we say that this sign represented on a blue ground a chicken in the process of being cooked, with this legend: "A la Belle-Étoile."

On the threshold, a man with a square cotton cap — made according to the fashion of the time — on a head that was perfectly bald, was haranguing and arguing. With one hand he brandished a naked sword, and waved a register, already half filled with signatures, with the other, crying at the top of

his voice: "Come on, come on, honest Catholics; enter the hostelry of the Belle-Étoile, where you will find good wine and a good welcome; come on, the moment is propitious; to-night the good will be separated from the wicked; to-morrow morning we shall know the wheat from the tares; come on, gentlemen; those who can write will come and write; those who cannot will give their names and surnames to me, Maître la Hurière, or to my assistant, M. Croquentin."

This M. Croquentin, a young rascal from Perigord, clad in white like Eliakim, and girt with a cord in which were stuck a knife and an inkhorn, — this M. Croquentin, we repeat, was writing rapidly the names of his neighbors, at the head of which he placed that of his respectable employer, Maître la Hurière.

"Gentlemen," shrieked the innkeeper of the Belle-Étoile, "gentlemen, it is for our holy religion! Hurrah for our holy religion, gentlemen! Hurrah for the Mass!"

He was nearly strangled from emotion and weariness, for this enthusiasm of his had been having full swing ever since four in the afternoon.

The result of it was that numbers, animated with the same zeal, signed their names on his register if they could write, or delivered them to Croquentin if they could not.

All this was the more flattering for La Hurière because he had a serious rival in the church of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, which stood close by. But fortunately the faithful were very numerous at that time, and the two establishments, instead of injuring, helped each other: those who could not penetrate into the church to sign their names in the register on the high altar tried to slip through to the place where La Hurière and Croquentin officiated as secretaries; and those who failed to reach La Hurière and Croquentin hoped for better luck at Saint Germain l'Auxerrois.

When the registers of the innkeeper and his assistant were full, La Hurière called for two more, so that there might be no interruption in the signatures, and the invitations were then cried out anew by the innkeeper, proud of his first success, which must, he was sure, gain him that high position in the opinion of M. de Guise to which he had long aspired.

While the signers of the new registers were surrendering themselves to the impulses of a zeal that was constantly growing warmer, and that was, as we have said, ebbing back

from one point to another, a man of lofty stature was seen elbowing his way through the crowd, distributing quite a number of blows and kicks on his passage, until he finally reached M. Fromentin's register.

Then he took the pen from an honest citizen who had just signed in a trembling hand, and traced his name in letters half an inch long, so that, what with his magnificent flourishes, splashes, and labyrinthine windings, the page, lately so white, became suddenly black. After this, he passed his pen to an aspirant who was waiting his turn behind him.

"Chicot!" read the next signer.

"Confound it!" said the latter, "what a magnificent hand this gentleman writes!"

Chicot, for it was he, had refused, as we have seen, to accompany Henri, and was determined to have a little fun with the League on his own account.

Chicot, having verified his presence on the register of M. Croquentin, passed immediately to that of Maître la Hurière. The innkeeper had seen the glorious flourishes admiringly but enviously. The Gascon was, therefore, received, not with open arms, but with open register, and, taking a pen from the hand of a woollen merchant who lived in the Rue de Béthisy, he wrote his name a second time with flourishes even more intricate and dazzling than the first; after which, he asked La Hurière if he had not a third register.

The innkeeper did not understand a joke; he was poor company outside his hostelry. He looked crossly at Chicot, Chicot stared at him in return. La Hurière muttered "heretic;" Chicot mumbled something about his "wretched cookshop." La Hurière laid down his register and seized his sword; Chicot laid down his pen and did the same. The scene, in all probability, would have ended in a collision, about the result of which the innkeeper would have had no reason to congratulate himself, when some one pinched the Gascon's elbow and he turned round.

The pincher was no other than the King, disguised as a citizen, and, with him, Quélus and Maugiron, in the same disguise, but with arquebuses on their shoulders as well as rapiers at their sides.

"Well, well!" said the King; "how is this? Good Catholics quarreling! *Par la mordieu!* 't is a bad example."

"My good gentleman," answered Chicot, pretending not to

recognize the King, "please to mind your own business. I am dealing with a blackguard who bawls after passers-by to sign his register, and, after they sign it, he bawls louder still."

The attention of La Hurière was distracted by new signers, and a rush of the crowd hustled Chicot, the King, and his minions away from the hostelry of the fanatic innkeeper. They took refuge on the top of a flight of steps from which they could see over the crowd.

"What enthusiasm!" cried Henri. "The interests of religion must be well advanced in my good city of Paris to-night."

"Yes, sire," answered Chicot; "but it is bad weather for heretics, and your Majesty knows that you are considered one. Look yonder, on the left; well, what do you see?"

"Ah! Mayenne's broad face and the sharp muzzle of the cardinal."

"Hush, sire; we play a safe game when we know where our enemies are and our enemies do not know where we are."

"Do you think, then, I have anything to fear?"

"Anything to fear? Great heavens! sire, in a crowd like this it is impossible to answer for anything. You have a knife in your pocket, that knife makes its way innocently into your neighbor's belly, quite unconscious of what it is doing, the ignorant thing! Your neighbor swears an oath and gives up the ghost. Let us go somewhere else, sire."

"Have I been seen?"

"I do not think so, but you will undoubtedly be if you remain longer here."

"Hurrah for the Mass! hurrah for the Mass!" cried a stream of people who came from the market-places, surged along like a tide, and was swallowed up in the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec.

"Long live M. de Guise! long live the cardinal! long live M. de Mayenne!" answered the crowd before the door of La Hurière, which had just recognized the two Lorraine princes.

"What mean those cries," said Henri, frowning.

"They mean that every one has his own place and should stay there: M. de Guise in the streets and you in the Louvre. Go to the Louvre, sire, go to the Louvre."

"You come with us?"

"I? Oh, no! you don't need me, my son; you have your ordinary bodyguards. Quélus, start at once, and you, Maugiron, do the same. As for me, I want to see the spectacle to the finish; it 's queer, if not amusing."

"Where are you going?"

"To put my name on the other registers. I want to have a thousand of my autographs running the streets of Paris to-morrow morning. We are now on the quay; good night, my son; you turn to the right, I to the left; each his own road. I am hurrying to Saint Méry to hear a famous preacher."

"Oh! stop, I say!" said the King, suddenly; "what is this new uproar, and why are people running in the direction of the Pont-Neuf?"

Chicot stood on tiptoe, but all he could see at first was a mass of people crying, howling, and pushing, apparently carrying some one or something in triumph.

At length, at the point where the quay, widening in front of the Rue des Lavandières, allows a crowd to spread to the right and left, the waves of the popular ocean opened, and, like the monster borne by the flood to the very feet of Hippolytus, a man, seemingly the principal actor in this burlesque scene, was driven by these human waves to the feet of the King.

This man was a monk mounted on an ass. The monk was speaking and gesticulating.

The ass was braying.

"*Ventre de biche!*" said Chicot, as soon as he could distinguish the man and animal now entering on the stage, the one on top of the other; "I was speaking of a famous preacher who was to hold forth at Saint Méry; it is n't necessary to go so far; listen to this one."

"A preacher on a donkey?" said Quélus.

"Why not, my son?"

"Why, it 's Silenus himself," said Maugiron.

"Which is the preacher?" asked Henri; "they are both speaking together."

"The one underneath is the most eloquent," answered Chicot, "but the one on the top speaks the best French; listen, Henri, listen,"

"Silence!" cried every one, "silence!"

"Silence!" cried Chicot, in a voice that rose high above all other voices.

After this, not a sound was heard. A circle was made round the monk and the ass. The monk dashed at once into his exordium.

"Brethren," said he, "Paris is a superb city; Paris is the

pride of the Kingdom of France and the Parisians are a remarkably clever people; the song says so."

And the monk began to sing at the top of his voice:

"'You've come from Paris, fair friend;—
So you know all that ever was penned!'"

But the ass blended his accompaniment so loudly and energetically with the words, or rather, with the air, that he stopped the mouth of his rider.

The people burst into a roar of laughter.

"Keep still, Panurge, keep still, I say," cried the monk; "you shall speak in your turn; but let me speak first."

The ass was quiet.

"My brethren," continued the preacher, "the earth is a valley of tears, a place where, most of the time, a man can quench his thirst only with his tears."

"Why, he's dead drunk!" said the King.

"Not unlikely," answered Chicot.

"I, who speak to you," continued the monk, "am returning from exile like the Hebrews, and, for a whole week, Panurge and myself have been living on alms and privations."

"Who is Panurge?" inquired the King.

"Probably the superior of his convent," answered Chicot. "But let me listen; the artless creature is really affecting."

"Who made me endure all this, my friends? It was Herod You know what Herod I mean."

"And you, too, my son," said Chicot; "I explained the anagram to you."

"You rascal!"

"To whom are you speaking?—to me or the ass or the monk?"

"To all three."

"My brethren," the monk went on, "behold my ass whom I love as much as if it were a sheep! he will tell you that we have come from Villeneuve-le-Roi in three days in order to take part in to-night's great solemnity. And how have we come?—

"'With empty purse,
And gullet dry.'

But no affliction could keep me and Panurge away."

"But who the devil is Panurge?" asked Henri, who could not keep this Pantagruelic name out of his head.

"We have come, then," continued the monk, "and also we have arrived, to see what is passing; but we see and do not understand. What is passing, my brethren? Is Herod to be deposed to-day? Is Brother Henri to be put into a convent to-day?"

"I tell you," said Quélus, "I have a strong desire to let out the contents of this swill-barrel. What do you say, Maugiron?"

"Bah!" said Chicot, "it takes so little to stir you up, Quélus. Don't they put the King in a convent every day of his life? Believe me, Henri, if that is all they do to you, you have n't much reason to complain. Is that not the case, Panurge?"

The ass, hearing his name called, pricked up his ears and began braying in a fashion that was absolutely terrific.

"Oh, Panurge! Panurge!" said the monk, "you should control your passions. Gentlemen," he went on, "I left Paris with two travelling companions: Panurge, who is my ass, and M. Chicot, who is his Majesty's jester. Gentlemen, can any of you tell me what has become of my friend Chicot?"

Chicot made a grimace.

"Ha!" said the King, "so he 's your friend?"

Quélus and Maugiron burst out laughing.

"A handsome creature, your friend," continued the King, "and respectable withal. What is his name?"

"Gorenflot, Henri; you know something of this dear Gorenflot of mine. M. de Morvilliers spoke a few words to you about him."

"The incendiary of Sainte Geneviève?"

"The same."

"In that case I 'll have him hanged."

"Impossible!"

"Why?"

"He 's got no neck."

"My brethren," continued Gorenflot, "in me you behold a true martyr. My brethren, it is my cause that is being defended at this moment, or rather, the cause of all good Catholics. You do not know what is going on in the provinces and what the Huguenots are hatching. At Lyons we were obliged to kill one of them, who was preaching rebellion. As long as a single one of the brood remain in a single corner of France, there will be no tranquillity for us. Therefore, let

us exterminate the Huguenots. To arms, my brethren, to arms!"

A number of voices repeated:

"To arms!"

"*Par la mordieu!*" cried Henri, "try to silence this drunkard, or we 'll have a second Saint Bartholomew."

"Wait, wait," said Chicot.

And, taking a cane from Quélus, he passed behind the monk and struck him with all his force on the shoulder.

"Murder! murder!" cried the monk.

"What! it 's you!" said Chicot, passing his head under the monk's arm, "how goes it, you rogue?"

"Help! help! M. Chicot," cried Gorenflot, "the enemies of the faith want to assassinate me. But I will not die without making my voice heard. To the fire with the Huguenots! to the stake with the Béarnais!"

"Will you be silent, you beast?"

"And to the devil with the Gascons!" continued the monk.

But at this moment, a second blow, not from a cane, but from a stout cudgel, fell on Gorenflot's shoulder, who screamed now from real pain.

Chicot looked round him in amazement; but he saw only the stick. The blow had been given by a man who immediately disappeared in the crowd, after administering this flying correction to Brother Gorenflot.

"Heaven and earth!" cried Chicot, "who the devil is it that has avenged us Gascons in this summary fashion? I wonder if he be a child of the country. I must try and find out."

And he ran after the man with the stick, who was rapidly slipping along the quay, escorted by a single companion.

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